

# **‘LEARNING TAKES PLACE’: HOW CAPE TOWN YOUTH LEARN THROUGH DIALOGUE IN DIFFERENT PLACES.**

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## **Declaration**

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## **Abstract**

This study is a multi-site ethnography that focuses on young people from one low-income, Cape Town neighbourhood, an area that I got to know well between 2008 and 2012, when I worked and conducted research there. I explore how young people from this area, that I call Rosemary Gardens, learn in three different places. These places are, firstly, classrooms at Rosemary Gardens High School, secondly, a community-based hip-hop/ rap group called the Doodvenootskap, and, thirdly, a youth radio show called Youth Amplified, which involved many young people from Rosemary Gardens.

In each of the three places a 'spatio-dialogical' analysis was used to examine learning that emerges through collaborative interactions between people. Dialogic learning may take place when young people are exposed to multiple, different perspectives, which manifest through language. This form of learning is 'spatialised' because it occurs through sets of social relations that coalesce at particular moments to form 'places'. Places are junctions or points of intersection within networks of social relations. I use the work of Bakhtin (1981; 1986) and Bourdieu (1977; 1991) to illustrate how, in each of the three places, language operates as a socio-ideological system that is divided, in flux and differentially empowered. This work on language as a social system was put into conversation with Lefebvre's (1991) spatial theory, producing tools that were used as lenses through which to interpret the ethnographic fieldwork.

What emerged was the centrality of the workings of language as a social system at Rosemary Gardens High School, Youth Amplified and amongst the Doodvenootskap. The control desired by educators, combined with the bureaucratic forces that restrict spontaneity in their teaching practices, resulted in the use of highly prescribed language forces dominating dialogic interactions at Rosemary Gardens High School. The different cultural influences and historical traditions, which produce the Doodvenootskap, led to the group reclaiming and reinventing varieties of language. At times this produced more sufficiently interactive forms of dialogic learning, amongst this group, and on other occasions they merely reiterated the words of others, without reflection or rigorous thought. Critical pedagogy, at Youth Amplified, laid the foundations for multiple contrasting perspectives and different linguistic forms to manifest.

In the media and in the imaginary of the South African middle and upper classes, schools in neighbourhoods that were formerly reserved for 'Black' and working-class 'Coloured' children are generally perceived to be dysfunctional places. Young people who live in the neighbourhoods in which these schools are located, are assumed to learn very little. Research with youth from Rosemary Gardens discovered that this kind of negative portrayal is only one

view of a multi-faceted set of stories. On a daily basis, young people from Rosemary Gardens use language in interactions with peers and adults, exchanges that shape their consciousness and influence how they make sense of the multiple social worlds which they partially produce.

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I am glad that I ventured out from the place on the hill because the people at Stellenbosch University, in Education Policy Studies, were an awesome community of scholars. A big thank you goes to Azeem Badroodien, my supervisor, as well as Aslam Fataar and all of their students, who made such a lively, insightful and committed set of companions on this journey.

I would like to thank my mom, who is now writing about pissflowers, pissfeathers and snarks, positioned within what she calls the 'lunatic fringe'. She never takes the road more travelled or less travelled, but takes her own road. My dad continues with his wonderful mixture of scepticism and eternal hope. He has always tried to open up places where dialogue might flourish and where people might work together (even though they rarely chose to do so), which are the topics of this thesis. My sister, Sara, is a constant source of support in my life.

My partner Lebogang, who I met during this journey, makes my world look more and more different, as it becomes more familiar. I love you Lebz.

The educators at the school that I have called Rosemary Gardens High welcomed me into their school and homes and showed me unlimited kindness, in much the same way as they show their learners every day. They are at the front of the firing line of the national education project and do such a thankless task. I admire you for the patience, perseverance, humour and love that you show to the people around you.

This thesis is dedicated to all of the young people of Rosemary Gardens, 'wie het vir my gehulp om my Afrikaans te verbeter'. Even though they said "please sir, please don't speak Afrikaans", when I ignored this advice they willingly taught me and never judged. And we learnt from each other. These young people never fail to dream. It is in that spirit that I have tried to write the pages that follow and from which I think the South African education machine could learn a great deal.

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## **Abbreviations**

|       |   |
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| AAVE  | African American Vernacular English       |
| ANC   | African National Congress                 |
| BHHS  | Barry Hertzog High School                 |
| BVK   | Brasse vannie Kaap                        |
| CIE   | Cape Institute of Education               |
| CRAAG | Children's Rights and Anti-Abuse Group    |
| DEIC  | Dutch East India Company                  |
| DCAS  | Department of Cultural Affairs and Sports |
| DVS   | Doodvenootskap                            |
| EMEP  | Extra-Mural Education Project             |
| GHF   | Global Hope Foundation                    |
| IRF   | Information Response and Feedback         |
| NGO   | Non Governmental Organisation             |
| PAGAD | People Against Gangsterism and Drugs      |
| RGHS  | Rosemary Gardens High School              |
| SIP   | School Is Power                           |
| UK    | United Kingdom                            |
| USA   | United States of America                  |
| WCED  | Western Cape Education Department         |

## **PROLOGUE**

Mrs Chantal Peters

*Our school is in the centre of the gangs. We lost a learner in 2002 one day after school. He was watching TV. He was in grade 1. He was sitting, um, at home, uh, the gangs were arguing outside, and one drew a gun and shot, and the bullet went through the door, and struck him, and he passed on. The gangs took ownership of Rosemary Gardens. We decided... we had to do something.... And, um, the only thing that we could think of was to start, or Mr Roberts could think of was to start a, um, a soccer team. And, um, slowly, very slowly we became the soccer school. And, Mr Roberts would then arrange with other schools outside of the area, and those schools wouldn't come into Rosemary Gardens, because of this violence. I went to the gangsters' homes too. I went to them and I spoke to them, because I became angry now. It's not, uh, only about the child that was killed, but it involved us too.*

Chantal Peters is a tough, stoical woman. She is also kind. I remember one occasion when I was joking with her in her office and I heard some faint giggles coming from behind a cupboard, only to realise that a misbehaving child had been stashed away behind the office furniture, serving his or her sentence while simultaneously sharing the joke with us. Mrs Peters has been the principal of Mountainside Primary School for over 30 years and her health has deteriorated over that time; she has suffered from inactive tuberculosis throughout all of the years that I have known her. Like myself, Chantal is a passionate Liverpool Football Club supporter.

Meeting Mrs Peters was one of a number of chance encounters that shaped my research in Rosemary Gardens between 2008 and 2012. I met Mrs Peters in 2008 at a workshop for teachers involved in the Cape Town based Extra-Mural Education Project, an NGO programme that developed after-school activities as a vehicle through which to enhance relationships between schools and their communities, as well as to provide young people with a more 'holistic' schooling experience. I worked for EMEP as a researcher from 2008 until 2012. At the

workshop, Mrs Peters told me that Mountainside had suffered from 22 acts of vandalism in one school term in 2006. After Mrs Peters shared this information with me I decided to spend as much time as possible at Mountainside Primary, thinking that if I could comprehend a school like Mountainside, one with many social problems, I would be able to understand any under-resourced school in Cape Town. I've since realised that this logic was very naive: the 40 schools with which EMEP partnered were all vastly different institutions, located in different contexts, with different rhythms, ebbs and flows. Schools are also the products of different mixtures of people. I became very fond of the staff at Mountainside and my EMEP colleagues often teased me that Mountainside was my favourite school, that I had a 'crush' on Mountainside.

One EMEP colleague who observed my interest in Mountainside asked if I would like to further my involvement in Rosemary Gardens by joining him on Saturday mornings at Rosemary Gardens High School, where he facilitated youth leadership sessions. Raymond had grown up in this neighbourhood and felt a personal connection to the school. During these youth leadership sessions I often tried to converse with the young people in Afrikaans. The learners thought that my Afrikaans sounded extremely comical. I have since been told that my Afrikaans has improved, demonstrating that I have also been schooled in Rosemary Gardens. Learners at Rosemary Gardens High School often asked me what country I am from. The only 'White' people that these youth encounter are Americans and Europeans who are completing internships at the school.

Mr Abdullah Williams

Through my involvement in this leadership programme I met a number of the Rosemary Gardens educators, as well as the principal, Mr Abdullah Williams. When he is anxious or thinking deeply, Mr Williams' eyebrows melt into a unitary entity, huddled together in solidarity. This often happens when I am trying to convince him of the value of another complicated idea, which I believe will benefit his school, an institution that is always already overflowing with people, projects and interventions attempting to 'save' the children of Rosemary Gardens.

During the anti-apartheid struggle Mr Williams was a devout African National Congress (ANC) cadre. He endured a spell in Victor Verster prison as a result of his political activism. His MA thesis comprised an action-research project entitled, *Towards participatory teaching and learning processes in the English language classroom*, which he completed at the University of the Western Cape. Mr Williams explained the reasons for his interest in participatory teaching and learning in the following manner:

*At an early age I was an activist. My mother's cousin was on Robben Island for 15 years, for sabotage. And when I was growing up we struggled economically. We weren't poor like as in Rosemary Gardens, but my mother was a single mother with six children in the 60s. These experiences hardened me, but they made me empathise with the downtrodden, with the wretched of the earth kind of thing...As a 13 year old already you thought of boycotting 'White' cricket, 'White' sport. It's quite advanced by our standards or the standards of today. You know, 13 year olds are on mxit (a social networking forum), they're not political animals. I became a teacher because of our mentor Mr Checkly. He came from a new unity movement way of thinking, mine was more in a charterist, ANC aligned thinking. We clashed with him, but he inspired me. He was my physical science teacher, but he'd often stop his lesson- and I took my Q from him- when we didn't want him to teach we'd ask him "Mr Checkly, did you hear there was an increase in the price of bread" and then he'd go on for two periods trying to educate us politically and otherwise. I never wanted to become a teacher to talk about the demonstrative adjective. That is, the personal pronoun in its subjective case. I never wanted to talk about that. Even when I chose a poem or short story. I would introduce it in a way to make it politically relevant. Or to make them aware of the issues of life whatever they may be. To look at things a bit deeper, beyond the superficial. As a teacher I wanted young people to be analytical, to think for themselves. And obviously, yes, to participate.*

Mrs May Hughes

Through my EMEP work and by spending time at Rosemary Gardens High I also met May Hughes. May is a 'White', middle-class woman in her seventies. May is desperate to make a contribution to social development and transformation in

Cape Town, something which she believes is possible through ensuring that more young people attend Rosemary Gardens High School for longer periods of time. She lives in a nearby, gated community. May is highly efficient and determined, one of those people who will persist relentlessly until she has attained the outcomes that she has planned to achieve. May raises large amounts of money for the Rosemary Gardens Development Trust, an institution that aims to support school projects through the provision of financial support. In 2005 May established the School Is Power project (SIP), with the intention of decreasing the number of youth in Rosemary Gardens that discontinue their schooling (appendix A is a pilot project proposal of the SIP project). As a means of illustrating the extent of school discontinuation amongst adolescents at Rosemary Gardens High, in 2012 there were over 400 grade 9's and only 60 grade 12s.

Through a contact I had made when I was employed at the Human Sciences Research Council, I facilitated a partnership between SIP and Vanderbilt University in the United States. In July of 2012, six doctoral students from Vanderbilt University travelled to Cape Town to help conduct a study for the SIP project. During this time a number of dialogues were held with community stakeholders. One such group that participated in the research was the provincial Department of Cultural Affairs and Sports coaching assistants (DCAS). DCAS has implemented a programme whereby young people from local communities are paid a stipend and in return they coach and facilitate a range of sporting and cultural activities after school, once the learners have been dismissed from their academic classes. More than 10 such coaches are stationed at RGHS on weekday afternoons. The group is led by a smart, friendly and energetic young man called Clause. Clause was born in Rosemary Gardens and knows the community intimately. Clause brought a number of outspoken young people to a series of stakeholder dialogues that were conducted with the Vanderbilt students.

Fabio

During one such afternoon session Fabio Julies, a young man of 17, reflected on his decision to stop attending school:



*When I'm at home I felt more stuff than I did at school because at school all I would do was read and write and not listen. I got bored after a while for me. Then after a while I just started writing poetry and that kind of stuff, and writing lyrics. When I'm at home I write better. When I'm at school I can't write because there's no activity or place for me to do that kind of stuff. So that was one of the, I can't say one of the main reasons, but yeah. I think I was the problem there, my mindset, where I was thinking.*

Fabio is a member of the 'Doodvenootskap' (meaning 'funeral service' or 'death partnership' literally, but a 'nood' is also the Afrikaans word for a musical note), a group of young hip-hop artists, musicians and social activists who want to bring about social change in Rosemary Gardens. Three members of the 'Doodvenootskap' group are also employed by an NGO called 'CRAAG', an organization that works with victims of abuse, attempts to improve gender relations in Rosemary Gardens and initiates general community development projects. At times conflict exists between CRAAG and the Doodvenootskap, as CRAAG does not want Doodvenootskap members to rap about violence in a manner that the NGO feels is inappropriate. Dylan Aprils, who comes from Rosemary Gardens himself, leads the CRAAG team at the Rosemary Gardens Community site, which is situated in the Global Hope Foundation building, approximately 1km from RGHS. Dylan is a fiery, articulate man who is approximately 30 years old. He is very critical of outsiders who enter Rosemary Gardens without contributing to the community's development. Dylan is also a positive mentor for the Doodvenootskap.

#### Adrian Louw

Adrian Louw is a big man. He is also well decorated: his tattoos took me by surprise one evening when he opened his front door without wearing a shirt. Adrian lives next door to me at number 69 Mountain Road. I live at number 71. He smokes Rothmans reds cigarettes outside on his stoep in the evenings and I often chat to him in passing. My cat Bella shits in his Rosemary bush, which looks very healthy, probably in some small part due to the expensive 'science diet' I feed Bella. Adrian is the station manager at a Cape Town community radio station. One evening he complained that the station could not secure a facilitator

for the Children's Radio Education Workshop and that the Saturday morning slot was thus left open. Having worked for four years conducting similar projects through the Extra-Mural Education Project, I believed that I could start a programme with youth during this time slot and use activity based research in order to stimulate dialogue between young people from different backgrounds. I invited Mr Williams to select five Rosemary Gardens High School students to participate in the programme. I also approached staff at three other schools, asking them if they would like for their students to be involved in the youth radio show. A few months later the young people agreed on the name 'Youth Amplified' for the show.

\*\*\*\*\*

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **OPENING PLACES**

*...the importance of struggling with another's discourse, its influence in the history of an individual's coming to ideological consciousness is enormous. One's own discourse... will sooner or later liberate themselves from the authority of the other's discourse.*

Bakhtin, 1981: 348

*A perspective on place enables us to consider how a particular locale—a classroom, community, town, after school club, or website—is not an isolated container, but positioned in a nexus of relations to other such locales. The simultaneity of multiple locales, and the contact zones between them, become an expanded terrain of examination and evidence concerning learning and place.... as classrooms or other sites of learning are seen less as parking lots and more as intersections, then the particular mobilities of people moving through them become a key issue for evidence and equity.*

Leander, Phillips & Taylor, 2010: 336

### **Three inter-connected learning places**

In one sense, my research in Rosemary Gardens unfolded organically as I was introduced to new people and places, as I traced and followed social connections, networks and sequences across inter-linked locations in a form of multi-site ethnography (Dimitriadis & Weis, 2004). However, this research project could also

be understood as a story that I have orchestrated, arranging a set of interactions that allowed certain chapters of this tale, such as the youth radio show, to unfold. It would also be true to say that part of this story emerged in retrospect, as I have tried to piece together different people, activities and histories, in order to create a coherent, unified narrative. To some degree, each of these three interpretations of the research process for this project is true. In reality research is a messy business, particularly so in low-income South African neighbourhoods where silence is a scarce commodity and convenient places for conducting research interview conversations tend to be elusive. In these circumstances research plans often have to be amended and data collection methods need to be improvised. What I can say, with confidence, is that I spent a great deal of time in one low-income neighbourhood that I will call Rosemary Gardens<sup>1</sup>, 'following' a range of people, primarily youth, in an effort to consolidate a larger story. This 'larger' story' pertains to the manner in which young people seek out and are provided with opportunities to learn, through using forms of language in different places, where they engage in situated dialogues with relevant others. In other words, my central question is:

***How do young people from one low-income Cape Town neighbourhood learn through dialogue in different places?***

I set about answering this question by studying three different places that comprise a multi-site ethnography. These places are: 1) classrooms at Rosemary Gardens High School (RGHS), 2) a virtual 'place' in the form of a collective of young people from this neighbourhood, called the Doodvenootskap (DVS), a group who write and rap their own lyrics and 3) a youth radio show called Youth Amplified, a learning place that I originally initiated and then actively participated in with a range of youth, many from Rosemary Gardens. The show was broadcast from a local community radio station to a 50km radius across the city of Cape Town.

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<sup>1</sup> All of the names of schools and people are pseudonyms.

### **Why a multi-site ethnography comparing classrooms, a rap group and a radio show?**

In the media and in the imaginary of the South African middle and upper classes, schools in neighbourhoods that were formerly reserved for 'Black' and working-class 'Coloured' children are generally perceived to be dysfunctional places. These schools are primarily associated with, for example, textbooks that do not arrive until late in the academic year, if at all, as demonstrated by the widely publicised 'Limpopo textbook crisis' (Veriava, 2013). It is assumed that large numbers of teachers, at such schools, are absent on most scheduled school days and that they are rarely present in the classroom, teaching. Young people who live in the neighbourhoods in which these schools are located, are assumed to learn very little and to spend most of their time either involved in criminal and/or gang affiliated activities, being pregnant or abusing various substances. While I accept that there is indeed some truth to these perceptions, this picture is only one view of a multi-faceted set of stories.

My research provides a different perspective to the one that exists in the media and the imaginary of the middle and upper classes. I present a set of formal and informal educational contexts that all involve the learning endeavours of young people from one low-income neighbourhood. It is a story in which violence, gangsterism and a lack of learning feature, but they are not the only themes. The story that I tell in this thesis is one that focuses on young people from an area considered to be one of the most dangerous and violent in Cape Town. Yet the government high school in this neighbourhood has access to textbooks, as well as to sports fields and coaches. At the school there are two computer laboratories, a library and a gymnasium. On most days, one or two of the 38 educators may well be absent, but the vast majority arrive at school and spend a great deal of time in classrooms, delivering the school curriculum. Outside of the school walls, gang affiliation, violence and substance abuse present considerable challenges and many young people are affected by these social problems. However, the overwhelming majority of young people in this neighbourhood do not join gangs and rather become involved in other activities that capture their imaginations and occupy their time.

For these young people, what happens in their homes and neighbourhood, as well as in interactions with peers, impacts on their experiences of 'the school'. These youth move through a range of places on a daily basis, each of which affects their developing consciousness. These places have relevance for one another. It is therefore short-sighted for educational research to ignore what transpires in homes, neighbourhoods and informal learning places, as these sites have a profound impact on classroom practices and outcomes. The classroom, perceived as an insulated container within which pedagogical interactions play out, remains the dominant object of study for most educational research. Yet this place, as it is currently conceptualised, is inadequate in terms of providing a spatial context that can aid in understanding young people's learning practices and their lives more broadly.

I suggest that a more holistic, complex understanding of the lives and learning practices of 21<sup>st</sup> century youth can be stimulated through multi-site ethnography, a method that can be used to enhance educational research. Studying different, juxtaposed formal and informal educational sites, that involve youth from the same neighbourhood, provides a lens through which to observe these young people as they move between inter-connected places. In this way, multi-site ethnography illuminates and develops new topologies for educational research. This is necessary in a global context where the neatly bounded ecologies of youth, presumed to have existed in earlier periods, have been more or less shattered (Weis & Dimitriadis, 2008; Katz, 1998). Space and time have been reconfigured in the global era, with technological innovations, increased mobility of people and capital, and new forms of hybridised cultural expression disturbing previous conceptualisations of social contexts, practices and experiences (Katz, 1998). In this scenario, multi-site ethnography has become an important methodological tool for understanding the rupturing of social life. This method has enabled research to trace and follow people, places, objects, metaphors and stories across quite different sites (Weis & Dimitriadis, 2008), and understand how people make meaning of this mobility. It is in the relationship between, for example, how youth use language at home

and at school that young people attempt to decode their place in the world and what their futures are likely to hold.

My multi-site ethnography also differs from approaches to educational research that contend that the school is a unique educational context, one in which particular forms of 'school knowledge' are produced through 'vertical discourses' (Bernstein, 1999; Moore & Muller, 1999). Such approaches generally imply that learning, in classroom contexts, is fundamentally different from similar learning processes that occur in out-of-school places, due to the cumulative and sequential nature of school knowledge (see for example Bernstein, 1999; Moore & Muller, 1999; Maton, 2000, 2013; Moss, 2000, 2001). Although there may well be differences between classrooms and other, informal learning contexts, there may also be similarities or "points of articulation" (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2012: 48). For example, young people use language, in order to interact with other people, in each of the places studied in this project. The places in this study all involve young people engaging with ideas and concepts, in exchanges with peers, educators and other adults. Studying these different places, side-by-side, therefore generates reciprocal insights into each of these sites and may lead to improved forms of support for youth.

What is certainly the case is that both formal and informal kinds of learning places are both essential to young people's success, in a globalised world. It is taken as given that in the current global context we cannot ignore formal educational processes, as the qualifications that they confer are the sine qua non for entry into the formal labour market and upward social mobility (Weis & Dimitriadis, 2008). However, formal education institutions can be complemented with insights into other out-of-school learning places that this and other research has highlighted are rich sites for the production of vibrant, authentic youth identities (Dimitriadis, 2009; Fine, Weis, Centrie & Roberts, 2000; Weis & Fine, 2000). In these informal sites, young people regularly engage with alternative cultural texts and learn on their own terms (Weis & Dimitriadis, 2008). As this thesis will show, young people are already reading, writing and

thinking in different places. Yet, we know and understand very little about these activities and how these different contexts relate to one another, because educational research, in South Africa, has generally focused on single sites. A multi-site ethnographic study therefore has the potential to make connections, highlighting how youth learn in and between a range of places and how they make sense of the multiple social worlds, which they partially produce.

Multi-site ethnography consists of juxtaposing and comparing different interlinked sites. In my study this meant probing how young people use language to learn through dialogue, in each of the three places, with differences and similarities between sites informing the analysis. I have conducted what I call a 'spatio-dialogical' analysis to explore how young people used forms of language, in each of the places of this multi-site ethnography, as they interacted with educators, other adults, peers from their own neighbourhood and young people who reside in different communities. A spatio-dialogical analysis brings together two terms, 'spatial' and 'dialogical', which are used in conjunction, in order to explore a particular form of learning. Spatio-dialogical learning, as I am conceptualising it, differs from learning theories that focus exclusively on the transfer of knowledge, or approaches that examine relationships between individual learners and the environments in which they learn. My particular interest was in the inter-subjective or social aspects of learning. I therefore required a learning theory that specifically focused on how relationships between people, mediated through language, facilitate or inhibit learning. Learning could then be juxtaposed and compared across the three places of this multi-site ethnography, in order to highlight links that illuminate a bigger story regarding Rosemary Gardens youth and their learning endeavours. Dialogic learning theory was helpful for my purposes and is therefore expanded upon below. I then examine how this form of learning is 'spatialised', through sets of social relations intersecting at particular moments, in each of the three places of this study. These two concepts can then be looked at together, in order to understand more comprehensively what is meant by a 'spatio-dialogical' analysis.



### **Dialogic learning, language and power**

Dialogic learning differs from cognitivist theories of learning that focus on thought processes as they occur *within* individuals, theories that are sometimes called 'jug and mug' (Merrett, 2000), 'banking' or 'transmission' (Freire, 1970) approaches to learning. Cognitivist learning theories imply that knowledge is able, metaphorically, to be poured into, or deposited/banked, within the heads of passive learners. Dialogic learning theories also differ from sociocultural learning frameworks that are largely based on the work of the Russian scholar Lev Vygotsky (1978; 1986). Sociocultural approaches focus on interactions between people and learning environments, analysing how these person-environment interactions lead to pathways of development for individual people (Wegerif, 2011). Vygotsky's work is more aptly characterised as 'dialectical' than 'dialogical'. Although there were certainly dialogical aspects to his research and theory, Vygotsky's (1986) main interest was in how individual development is produced through the dialectical relationship between social forces and the growing young person. This was formulated through his theory of how important relationships, with others, lead to concept development, improved language use and higher mental functions (Vygotsky, 1978, 1986; Wegerif, 2011). Vygotsky's focus was therefore primarily on individual person outcomes and how these may be improved through, for example, the 'zone of proximal development'. The zone of proximal development represents the difference between what an individual person may achieve on their own, in comparison to their development when aided by relevant others.

In contradistinction to cognitivist and sociocultural learning theories, dialogical forms of learning involve inter-subjective processes in which people collectively make meaning of each other's perspectives. The social interactions between people are therefore integral to this approach to learning. I had researched learning in a diverse set of places that contained a range of different kinds of interactions between youth and other people who moved through these sites. Comparing how learning took place in each of these places therefore meant contrasting how social relationships, mediated by language, operated in place specific ways. Theorising how these exchanges may or may not have stimulated

forms of learning entailed analysing how language and power operate, over time, in interactions between people. It also became clear that a highly divergent set of outcomes can be expected from a classroom, a radio show and a hip-hop crew, meaning that a rigid, normative structure of 'good learning' and 'bad learning' would not suffice for my purposes. Dialogical forms of learning focus on knowledge co-construction, as people learn from each other and create products to which all of the participants have contributed. This approach is therefore able to avoid classifying or assessing learning in stark, instrumentalist terms, rather focusing on the processes through which learning does or does not happen.

Dialogic learning involves people using the language to which they have access, in order to engage with the perspectives of others (Alexander, 2008). Together these different perspectives, that are historically situated, create dialogic interactions, comprised of numerous perspectives that are concurrently held together, in tension. Collectively, these perspectives or utterances create meaningful sequences and may lead to the production of co-constructed knowledge (Alexander, 2008). Through dialogic exchanges, a range of opinions are held together simultaneously, in an unsynthesised form, encouraging participants to compare and assess these different perspectives and to develop their own opinions (Wegerif, 2008; 2011). Thus conceived, dialogic learning involves people interacting to produce meaningful dialogic threads, building upon and challenging each other's ideas. Dialogic exchanges are integral to young people learning about ideas and arguments because interactions with others challenge young people to think about and reassess their own thoughts and positions. As Bakhtin (1981) states in the epigraph to this chapter, it is through grappling with other people's perspectives and discourses, questioning these and one's own positions, that people's ideological consciousness develops. However, dialogic learning is not, primarily, an individual process, as it involves all of the participants learning from one another, co-constructing knowledge and dialogues, collectively.

Dialogic learning is therefore produced through people reflecting on their own and others' thoughts, which they translate into language, in order to contribute to sequences of utterances. An utterance is always one link in a chain of responses

and needs to be interpreted in relation to other links and the chain as a whole (Wegerif, 2011). Through using language to establish the shared meaning contained in different utterances, concepts are formed and developed. Thus, through dialogue, language and concept formation, young people actively perform the communication of situated and shared meanings (Gadamer, 1975). Meaning is not something that pre-exists the dialogue, but it is created and recreated in the dialogic process, part of which includes internal dialogues of thought (Wegerif, 2011).

Dialogic theory emphasises the importance of incorporating the immediate and historical contexts in which interactions take place, into the analysis, as dialogic exchanges are partly constituted by these historical circumstances. The preeminent scholar of dialogic theory, Mikale Bakhtin, used a literary analysis of the novel to demonstrate how dialogue manifests through the contributions of the author, narrator and characters, interacting with the space and time of the reader (Bakhtin, 1981; Gardiner, 1992). These perspectives convey the author's intentions, albeit in a refracted manner. Following Matusov (2007:215), I agree that "we need at least three translations to access his (Bakhtin's) scholarship", such that we may use Bakhtin's theory for educational research. For my purposes, using Bakhtin's work meant translating it into the context of South Africa in the second decade of the twentieth century, in comparison to the context in which it was written, namely the mid-twentieth century Soviet Union. His work has also been translated from the Russian language in which it was written, into English and, finally, it has been adapted from a literary analysis to the use of this theory in an educational context.

'Translating' Bakhtin's theory entailed making it fit for my purposes, while remaining true to his original worldview and the core tenets of his philosophy. At the heart of Bakhtin's scholarship is an attempt to interrogate how language is both an individual and a social phenomenon, one that is historically situated. In my case, translating Bakhtin has therefore meant analysing how the utterances of young people, from Rosemary Gardens, operate in relation to the historically situated places in which these utterances emerge, instead of analysing, as Bakhtin (1981; 1986) did, the relationship between dialogues, characters and the

historical context of the author. I have therefore carried out these ‘translations’ while attempting to remain true to the core ontological underpinnings of Bakhtin’s work. My approach to interpreting dialogic interactions in Rosemary Gardens is therefore aligned with Bakhtin’s belief that dialogue between people is embedded in broader relationships between individuals, groups and historical contexts. This has implications for a dialogic epistemology, to which I have also attempted to remain true, as dialogic knowledge emerges through analysing the relationships between individual utterances, heteroglossia, and historical contexts or, as Bakhtin (1981: 272) puts it:

*The authentic environment of an utterance, the environment in which it lives and takes shape, is dialogised heteroglossia, anonymised and social as language, but simultaneously concrete, filled with specific content and accentuated as an individual utterance.*

Heteroglossia is a key tool of dialogism, one that I have used extensively, (Bakhtin, 1981; 1986), translated into the context in which I am working. This concept bridges the divide between the conversational component of dialogue and dialogue as a historical phenomenon, located in broader social and structural contexts. Heteroglossia, literally meaning ‘many tongues’, illuminates how language is a divided and changing social structure. It is formed through multiple interacting utterances, or ‘tongues’, that originate in a range of places and which are generally used with different intentions. Heteroglossia therefore implies that languages are not unified, coherent entities, but are better thought of as a conglomeration of interacting words and utterances that arise from a range of places. Utterances may emerge from the elite sectors of government and the aristocracy, the haggling of the market place or insults hurled on the street. Together these snippets of language form ‘dialogised heteroglossia’, which, as Bakhtin (1981) points out, means that language transcends the individual-social binary by being simultaneously used by individuals, as well as existing as a changing social structure. I have therefore translated Bakhtin’s theory and core concepts into the context in which I am working, while attempting to remain true to his original project. At Rosemary Gardens High School, Youth Amplified and amongst the Doodvenootskap I analyse the utterances of youth and others,

exploring the social origins of their words and how these different utterances intersect to form “dialogised heteroglossia” (Bakhtin, 1981). I then look at whether these utterances may be used collectively, to co-construct forms of knowledge, by catalysing young people to reflect on their own perspectives in relation to the views of others, in each of these places.

The social nature of language is further exemplified by the fact that the range of ‘tongues’ or different varieties and strands of languages, that combine to form heteroglossia, are differentially imbued with power and status. This is partly due to the fact that people use words and languages that have attained different statuses through historical and political processes. Specific varieties of a language become standardised over time, while other less esteemed versions of a language are given the status of ‘pidgin’, ‘creole’ and ‘informal language’ (Bourdieu, 1991; Mesthrie, Swann, Deumert, & Leap, 2009). Through the variety of a language that a person speaks, as well as their pronunciation, accent and vocabulary, people indicate their social status to whoever is listening, insinuating their identifications and positionings with regard to, for example, race, class, gender and nationality. This has implications for young people’s capacity to learn through dialogue. Through people’s accents, grammar, their choice of words and the histories attached to their utterances, people emit signals regarding their place in the social structure and others make assumptions regarding, for example, the speaker’s education and intelligence (Bourdieu, 1991).

Bourdieu (1991) refers to the way a person speaks, including their accent and word choices, as their ‘linguistic habitus’, a particular case of his more general concept of ‘habitus’. Habitus refers to internalised, durable dispositions displayed by individuals across contexts (Bourdieu, 1977; 1990). Habitus is forged through the ways in which a person’s social world, such as class, culture and gender, become etched onto their everyday practices. Linguistic habitus is observed in accents, pronunciation, semantic choices and syntactic organisations (Dixon, 2011). Through socialisation processes that involve family and others, a person learns to use language in particular ways, developing their linguistic habitus. Linguistic habitus therefore leaves the residue of the social structure after every interaction that involves language (Thomson, 1991), in the process

communicating to young people whether or not they may legitimately participate in a conversation and whether they belong in a particular place.

In order to demonstrate how language is differentially imbued with power and social status, in a systemic manner, Bourdieu (1991) borrows terms from the field of economics, such as linguistic 'capital' and linguistic 'products' with contingent 'value', which collectively form the linguistic 'market'. Linguistic capital refers to a person's capacity to generate valuable linguistic 'products'. These products are kinds of utterances that hold value due to their esteem in different linguistic markets. Through the ways in which a person is able to speak, they are therefore endowed with linguistic resources that can be used to attain social elevation. While certain kinds of linguistic capital may hold value in the 'market' of, for example, gang or prison life, or in pubs in working-class neighbourhoods, particular forms of linguistic capital are most valued nationally, internationally and in powerful educational institutions.

Young people from Rosemary Gardens, who are the subjects of this study, predominantly speak Kaapse<sup>2</sup> (Cape) Afrikaans at home. Kaapse Afrikaans is an informal variety of Afrikaans. South Africa has 11 official national languages, including English, Afrikaans- which evolved from Dutch- and nine indigenous African languages. In the Western Cape, Afrikaans is most widely spoken (49.7%), with isiXhosa (24.7%) and English (20.3%) less spoken (Statistics South Africa, 2011).

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<sup>2</sup> Kaapse Afrikaans is the variety of Afrikaans that is predominantly spoken by 'Coloured' people in the Cape Province. I use the term Kaapse (adjective) or Kaaps (noun) instead of 'kombuistaal' or 'gamtaal', as these other two words have been used in derogatory ways.

**Table 1.** Cape Town languages spoken 2011

| Language  | % of total population |
|-----------|-----------------------|
| Afrikaans | 35.7%                 |
| English   | 28.4%                 |
| isiXhosa  | 29.8%                 |
| Other     | 6.1%                  |
| TOTAL     | 100%                  |

*Source: Census 2011*

However, as stated, languages are heteroglot products, with the version of Afrikaans that is the outcome of 'White' Afrikaner nationalism diverging from the variety that is spoken by Capetonians who are the descendants of slaves, Muslim South Africans and others who form part of Cape Town's rich and diverse linguistic history. Kaapse Afrikaans is often associated with working-class 'Coloured'<sup>3</sup> people in Cape Town and also, prejudicially, generates stereotypes

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<sup>3</sup> I use the term 'Coloured' not as an essentialised racial category, but rather as, following Erasmus (2001: 21): "cultural identities comprising detailed bodies of knowledge, specific cultural practices, memories, rituals and modes of being. Coloured identities were formed in the colonial encounter between colonists (Dutch and British), slaves from East and South India and from East Africa and conquered indigenous peoples, the Khoi and the San. This encounter and the power relations embedded in it have resulted in processes of cultural dispossession, borrowing and transformation. The result has been a highly specific and recognisable cultural formation- not just a 'mixture' but a very particular mixture comprising elements of Dutch, British, Malaysian, Khoi and other forms of African culture appropriated, translated and articulated in complex and subtle ways. These elements acquire their specific cultural meaning only once fused and translated."

I use the terms 'Coloured', 'Black' and 'White' because these terms were used regularly by the young people in this study. Racial categories continue to have relevance in contemporary South Africa because of the relationship between race, class and neighbourhood. Neighbourhoods that were reserved for people classified

**Table 2.** South African languages spoken 2011

| Language      | % of total population |
|---------------|-----------------------|
| Afrikaans     | 13.5%                 |
| English       | 9.6%                  |
| isiNdebele    | 2.1%                  |
| isiXhosa      | 16%                   |
| isiZulu       | 22.7%                 |
| Sepedi        | 9.1%                  |
| Sesotho       | 7.6%                  |
| Setswana      | 8%                    |
| Sign language | 0.5%                  |
| SiSwati       | 2.5%                  |
| Tshivenda     | 2.4%                  |
| Xitsonga      | 4.5%                  |
| Other         | 1.6%                  |
| TOTAL         | 100%                  |

*Source: Census 2011*

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as 'Black' or 'Coloured' under apartheid continue to be inhabited by people who classify themselves as members of these groups. Most 'White' people continue to be relatively rich, and live in well-resourced areas and most people (or their families) who are poor, were classified as 'Coloured' or 'Black' under apartheid.



and connotations of its users being uneducated and uncouth, as well as their having an affinity for substance abuse, criminality and illicit sexual activity. Young people's use of this language therefore has significance for their learning, as others regularly evaluate their words in a disparaging manner, due to the lowly place of Kaapse Afrikaans in the linguistic market. This often results in Kaapse Afrikaans speaking youth being positioned towards the bottom of the social hierarchy. Dialogic theory, utilising tools such as 'heteroglossia' and language as a socio-ideological system, therefore enables an examination of the interface between individual people's utterances, in conversations with relevant others. This theory lays the foundation for an analysis of how young people learn through historically situated social interactions that occur in different places.

### **'Making learning places': the production of place**

The 'spatio' component of my 'spatio-dialogical' analysis relates to the fact that whilst language is a prominent force that structures, enables or inhibits dialogic learning, it is not the only social factor that shapes this process. A range of sedimented social relations impact on learning through the ways in which dialogues are 'spatialised', in particular places. Following Sheehy & Leander (2004) I use the word 'spatialised' to demonstrate that space, as I am using it, is a verb: it is in motion and changing through evolving socio-historical relations that influence learning. The notion of space as produced and evolving through social relations has been explored extensively by Lefebvre (1991). Lefebvre (1991: 11) critiques the ways that people have traditionally thought about space, by referring to three commonly envisioned "fields of space", which he calls 'physical, mental and social space'. Lefebvre (1991: 11) argues that spatial theorising has been hampered because theoretical unity is unable to be achieved through dividing space into "physical", "mental" and "social" fields. He shows how each field should rather be thought of as simultaneously 'real' and 'imagined', rather than as three independent fields. As an alternative approach to theorising space, Lefebvre (1991) proceeds to describe three interlocking "moments of social space" (Lefebvre, 1991: 40), illustrating how social space, the subject of his investigation, functions in its totality. Lefebvre (1991: 33) calls these three moments of social

space “spatial practices, representations of space and representational spaces”. At other times in *The production of space* Lefebvre refers to these three moments of social space as ‘perceived’, ‘conceived’ and ‘lived’ space.

For purposes of clarity and simplicity, I will call these three moments of social space ‘Real’, ‘Imagined’ and ‘Lived’ space. I have chosen the term ‘Real’ space because Lefebvre (1991: 14) states that “‘real’ space...is the space of social practice” and I think that the concept ‘Real space’ is less confusing than ‘spatial practices’. Lefebvre (1991) uses the term ‘Lived’ space interchangeably with ‘representational spaces’ in his text; I have chosen the term ‘Lived’ space because it is simpler. Similarly, I have decided to use the term ‘Imagined’ space and not ‘representations of space’ for the sake of clarity. This form of space refers to the ways in which space is conceived in the mind of scientists, architects and planners, “a certain type of artist with a scientific bent” (Lefebvre, 1991:38). It therefore refers to the ways in which space is *Imagined* in the minds of human beings. I capitalise ‘Real’, ‘Imagined’ and ‘Lived’ space to highlight that these are the forms of space described by Lefebvre (1991) and should not be interpreted colloquially. Lefebvre’s (1991) text is slippery and elusive, illustrating how he imagines space to function and the fact that it is a concept that he feels is almost impossible to capture in a linear fashion, through language (Soja, 1996). While I respect what Lefebvre (1991) was trying to achieve with this approach, I have instead opted for terms that aim to attain conceptual lucidity.

To elaborate on these three ‘moments of social space’, Real space, as it relates to learning, consists of spatial practices, for example school transport routes, everyday teaching and learning routines, employment relations that determine which schools learners attend and the erection of particular kinds of neighbourhoods and their associated schools. Imagined space is the dominant spatial form of any society, observed through the languages, discourses, signs and symbols that operate in and through schools, other informal learning places and society more broadly (Lefebvre, 1991). Lived space is forged through the interactions between Real and Imagined space, as people find ‘ways of being’, which they create through the interstices of these other spatial forms. Lived space is also independent of these other kinds of space, located in forms of resistance

to power or 'subterranean' manifestations of social relations (Lefebvre, 1991). Lefebvre (1991) states that forms of Lived space are directly experienced, can be observed in art and other non-verbal forms of expression and are often linked to the clandestine or underground aspects of life that the imagination attempts to depict and transform.

Understanding how dialogue and learning operate in my three sites therefore requires an exploration of the manner in which utterances, language and dialogues are spatialised through Real, Imagined and Lived relations that intersect to produce the three specific places on which I am focussing. A 'place', as opposed to 'space', represents different forms of space intersecting at particular moments, articulating in specific combinations of Real, Imagined and Lived social relations (Massey, 1994). The three places that form the sites for my research are theorised to comprise junctions or intersections of social relations that evolve over time. The melange of these relations enable or inhibit learning. In other words, a learning place does not only consist of the physical bricks and mortar that constitute its walls and roof; places are created through social relations, as well as associated histories, institutional cultures and power dynamics that contribute to their genesis and reproduction.

A 'spatio-dialogical' analysis therefore proposes that learning is a thoroughly social process that occurs through the interaction of people's differentially empowered utterances, that are proclaimed over time, and which are shaped by Real, Imagined and Lived spatial forces. It is not, simply, a mechanistic, cognitive transfer of knowledge from one 'vessel' to another. In the three sites of this project learning occurs through interactions between people, exchanges that are historically situated in Real conditions, which are themselves produced by social relations. Dialogue is also shaped by Imagined spatial forces, such as language, that communicate social status and exert the forces of power. In the interstices of these Real and Imagined spatial forces people find ways of 'Living' in learning places, as they exchange words and perform other practices that communicate forms of shared meaning.

Engaging with ideas, concepts and the different layers of the social world therefore never takes place in a vacuum. This process is always already situated in accumulated sets of social relations that implicate other people, joint histories, Real circumstances and power relations. Throughout this research project I have explicated the integrated nature of this interaction between people's interacting, heteroglot utterances and spatial contexts, illuminating how historically contingent social relations impact on dialogic learning. The relationship between people's actions, ideas and knowledges is always a recursive one, as individuals are already positioned within webs of social relations that partially predetermine what words mean, what ideas are used for and how knowledge is valued.

### **'Dialogic learning' and 'place' transcend binaries**

I have used a diverse conceptual repertoire, translated into the contexts in which I am working, in order to aid me in transcending a number of binaries: subjectivity-objectivity, individual-society, sociology-psychology, knower-knowledge and policy-ethnography. These tools allow me to move beyond either making a macro socio-historical critique of learning places in South Africa or, alternatively, solely conducting a micro-analysis of how young people subjectively experience learning in their everyday lives. This split, between macro and micro studies, has plagued the Sociology of Education for some time now (Shilling, 1992). Macro positions such as functionalism, a standpoint which perceives schools as an integral component of society, functioning to reproduce social relations and hierarchies (for example Bowles & Gintis, 1976), often fail to account for micro, everyday practices, forms of resistance and transformation (Giroux, 1983; 2001). Another trend of macro analysis that often negates individual agency is a strand of education policy studies that interprets developments in education since the 1990s as increasingly globalised under the general remit of 'neoliberalism' (Apple, 2001; Ball, 2013; Rivzi & Lingard, 2010; Gulson & Fataar, 2011; Rivzi & Lingard, 2010). According to this school of thought, education policies have become progressively influenced by forces beyond the national level and are more sufficiently standardised and corporatised, based on values of efficiency, measurement and testing. While generating valuable macro insights, this kind of

theorising often excludes what Appadurai (2001; 2004) calls 'globalisation from below', the ways in which local communities and networks take advantage of aspects of these conditions and produce new forms of resistance, without simply becoming powerless victims of 'the system'.

On the other hand, research that examines individual learning outcomes and subjective experiences of schooling cannot provide a nuanced account of the broader contexts that 'spatialise' those outcomes and experiences. Place/space, with a focus on how Lived space is forged by people through the interstitial cracks between Real and Imagined macro societal forces, is able to challenge this binary. Similarly, dialogism allows for an analysis of individual utterances as contributing to and transforming dialogues, language and social/historical contexts. These concepts therefore open up the space for an analysis of practices, with the potential for social transformation, without naively proposing that individuals are in control of their own destinies. I believe that a focus on practices and dialogues that illuminates aspects of broader social conditions, and seeks to understand individual actions, is necessary to understand complex learning and social processes.

### **Lived space and youth**

The notion of Lived space is crucial to a study of youth and learning in contemporary South Africa, because young people are, and have been, consistently portrayed as a 'danger/threat', a 'failure' or a 'problem' in this country. This phenomenon has been documented elsewhere, as representations of youth regularly illuminate national insecurities and class-based moral panics, in the face of precarious social conditions, instead of shedding light on young people themselves (Cohen, 1972; Dillabough & Kennelly, 2010). This is especially true for a study on poor youth of 'colour' in contemporary South Africa, as this group are generally associated either with crime, or as a component of the 'dysfunctional' education system. This sentiment of 'Black' and 'Coloured' youth being uniformly understood as a threat to society has a long and sad history in South Africa (Marks, 2001; Seekings, 1993, 1995, 1996). The *swart gevaar*

('Black' danger) was a term used to describe young 'Black' masculinities that date back to street gangs of the 1940s and 50s and the emergence of the South African welfare state (Badroodien, 1999). Political activists of the 1960s and 1970s and the 'Young Lions' or 'foot soldiers' of the mid 1980s and early 1990s constitute other prevalent depictions of violent, young, 'Black' masculinities that generally provoked fear. The 'Young Lions' were apartheid era youth who disrupted classrooms and fought street battles against the apartheid state, in so doing rendering the townships ungovernable (Samara, 2005; Seekings, 1996).

These negative connotations of 'Black' and 'Coloured' youth have been rearticulated in new guises in the South African social imaginary during the democratic period. Youth in contemporary South Africa have come to represent deep underlying social anxiety, linked to the radically disproportionate number of young people in relation to the population as a whole, high crime and unemployment rates and unresolved racial inequalities (Samara, 2005). In this context youth are constantly perceived as a problem that needs to be solved and as an obstacle to healthy societal development. As stated, youth representing social fears is certainly not unique to South Africa and has been theorised extensively in other contexts. For example Cohen's (1972) classic study of the British mods and rockers demonstrated how nations construct myths through the classification and 'delinquency' of youth subcultures. Cohen (1972) argued that these degrading representations of youth were linked to the broader society's post-war moral panic, feelings of 'loss' and dissipating notions of British culture and nationalism in the midst of rapid social change (Dillabough & Kennelly, 2010). The ways in which young people are portrayed often shed more light on the 'portrayers', the most powerful groups in society and their concomitant insecurities and puritanical desires for order and control. These insecurities are often linked to religious beliefs and social conditions characterised by uncertainty.

Viewing learning through the concept of Lived space offers opportunities to avoid depicting youth solely in relation to societal fears, feelings of loss and cultural unravelling. Instead, Lived space may promote understandings of how youth learn through utilising forms of agency, language, voice and narratives that illuminate the complexity of young people's lives. Exploring the Lived learning places of

youth allows us to see how young people experience, navigate and interpret their worlds, in an everyday manner and as a component of their collective narratives and individual biographies (see Fataar, 2010 for a good example of this in the South African context). Part of this process involves looking at forms of resistance as intentional responses to young people's socio-historical milieus and not simply as 'deviance' or 'delinquency', (Blackman, 2005; Dillabough & Kennelly, 2010; Dimitriadis, 2009; Shildrick & MacDonald, 2006).

Lived places of learning therefore provide a lens into young people by foregrounding what they say about their own lives, viewing youth as agents within these narratives. This works against the grain of stereotypes that only portray youth from areas like Rosemary Gardens as a threat and a problem. Part of this phenomenon involves capturing young people's everyday forms of 'subterranean' resistance to power, not only through rituals (Clarke, Hall, Jefferson & Roberts, 1976), but also through their forms of language, communication and dialogic interactions. To sum up and emphasise, in this study I explore Lived space by documenting the manner in which youth learn through situated dialogues and how these dialogues challenge young people's complex and changing understandings of their Real and Imaginary worlds, as well as how they understand themselves.

### **Structure of the thesis**

In this opening chapter I have begun the conceptual work of putting 'place' and 'dialogic learning' into conversation. This functions to set the scene for the later substantive chapters in which the empirical fieldwork in the three 'places' is described and analysed in detail. Using 'place' and 'dialogic learning' as the basis for an educational research project is an unusual approach. I therefore needed to explain the terms that I am using and the ways in which I am using them in my project. This includes documenting the 'translations' involved in reinterpreting these concepts, from the contexts in which they were used originally, to the sites of my empirical investigation, amongst youth in Rosemary Gardens, in post-apartheid Cape Town. I have introduced a new vocabulary that provides the

groundwork for a conversation between 'dialogic learning' and 'place', as these concepts play out in the empirical investigation that follows. Chapter two provides more depth in terms of the conceptual tools that pertain to 'dialogic learning', as I am using this construct. In chapter three I unpack 'place' in greater detail, exploring how it may be combined with my other main concept of 'dialogic learning'. In this chapter I describe what is meant by a 'learning place' and then look at how learning is shaped by socio-spatial relations in the three places researched in this thesis. Having set up the conversation between 'dialogic learning' and 'place', chapter four enlarges on my methodology that centres on an iterative process between conceptual and empirical components. This chapter therefore serves as a bridge from the initial conceptual chapters into the substantive component of the thesis. Chapters five, six and seven consist of analyses of the bulk of the empirical work in the three places, with chapter five concentrating on Rosemary Gardens High School, chapter six on the Doodvenootskap and chapter seven on Youth Amplified. In these chapters I explore the concepts outlined in the first three chapters, as they applied to my interviews, observations and activities with young people, and some adults, from Rosemary Gardens. Chapter eight is a comparison of how language operates in the three learning places, as the importance of language was a central finding in chapters five, six and seven. I conclude in chapter nine.



## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LEARNING, LANGUAGE AND DIALOGUE**

*It (dialogue) is the art of forming concepts through working out the common meaning. What characterizes a dialogue... is precisely this: that in dialogue spoken language—in the process of question and answer, giving and taking, talking at cross purposes and seeing each other's point—performs the communication of meaning.*

Gadamer, 1975: 361

*Just as our skin provides us with a means to negotiate our interactions with the world- both in how we perceive our surroundings and in how those around us perceive us- our language plays an equally pivotal role in determining who we are: it is **The Skin That We Speak** (original emphasis).*

Delpit, 2002: xvii

*As we attempt to analyse dialogue as a human phenomenon, we discover something which is the essence of dialogue itself: the word. But the word is more than just an instrument which makes dialogue possible; accordingly, we must seek its constitutive elements. Within the word we find two dimensions, reflection and action, in such radical interaction that if one is sacrificed—even in part—the other immediately suffers. There is no true word that is not at the same time a praxis.*

Freire, 1970: 87

## **Introduction**

Expanding on my 'spatio-dialogic' approach to learning in three inter-linked places, this chapter explores in greater depth the 'dialogic' component of this construct. I begin by outlining how the dialogic learning process involves a range of contrasting, co-existing perspectives, which people grapple with through attempts to understand the similarities and differences between positions. In this way, dialogic exchanges involve the "fusing of horizons" (Gadamer, 1975: 306), as people try to understand the relationships between their view or 'horizon' and the perspectives of others. Together these different perspectives create a product that is comprehensively social in nature, formed through interactions between people. Through dialogic interactions people also develop their understanding of concepts, and I introduce the notion of double-voicedness, the ways in which youth incorporate the words of others into their own utterances. I then explore how power operates on language and learning in different places. Dialogue is shaped by language, a social phenomenon that is imbued with power and status. The language that young people utilise in their utterances is therefore assessed by other people and institutions, which, reciprocally, communicate powerful messages to youth regarding the value of their words. These messages have implications for whether or not young people choose to partake in similar linguistic exchanges in the future. The structure of certain types of exchanges, known as 'speech genres' (Bakhtin, 1986), offer youth opportunities to enter into and participate in linguistic interactions and engage with multiple perspectives, while other dialogues are shaped such that young people are barred from discussions. Thus, the ways in which young people from Rosemary Gardens were able to engage with concepts and the words of others, within the operations of language as a social system that appeared in different forms, in a range of contexts, shaped their dialogic learning.

## **Dialogic learning**

### **Dialogue as multiple perspectives existing simultaneously**

Dialogic learning, in my project, involved youth interacting with peers and older people, as they collectively considered multiple perspectives. This form of learning comprises of different perspectives that are positioned in conflict, meaning that the differences between perspectives may be explored, as they 'rub up against one another', but do not merge (Wegerif, 2007). Put another way, dialogic learning promotes the examination of different, unintegrated answers, unlike other learning exercises in which young people are taught to work towards a final solution, such as with mathematical problems. The existence of contrasting perspectives in dialogue encourages participants to recognise and attempt to understand the various positions. This involves assessing the similarities and discrepancies between statements and analysing how one's own outlook differs from the views of others.

A crucial initial question is whether, and if so how, young people are actually provided with opportunities to generate utterances and responses and engage in dialogues, in the three different places. This point may seem obvious, but socio-historical contexts regularly function such that young people's utterances are suppressed and silenced (Fine, 1991). The first component of my analysis therefore involves determining whether dialogue, in the form of utterances of young people from Rosemary Gardens interacting with other people's viewpoints, actually occurs in these three places and if so, providing a thorough description of these dialogic interactions. Expanding on this point, it is insufficient for young people merely to be granted permission to generate utterances in these places: they require opportunities to make utterances that militate against, or add to, the opinions of others, as it is the existence of different interacting perspectives that stimulates dialogic learning.

Dialogic forms of learning therefore require that youth actively participate in and contribute to linguistic exchanges, as they make meaning of different viewpoints. This process may have a profound influence on the consciousness of individual youth, if they are forced to reflect on and reassess their own utterances in the light of other, new standpoints. Volosinov (who is widely believed to be Mikhail Bakhtin writing under another name) describes how people make sense of and respond to the utterances of others in the following manner:

*To understand another person's utterance means to orient oneself with respect to it, to find the proper place for it in the corresponding context. For each word of the utterance that we are in process of understanding, we, as it were, lay down a set of our own answering words.*

(Volosinov 1973: 102)

The terms 'orienting' oneself and finding 'corresponding' utterances utilises a spatial metaphor, indicating that people need to find comparable words and align their conceptual maps through dialogue, establishing where common ground or meaning exists and where differences lie. This is negotiated linguistically, in conversation, as people compare the meaning of their own words to the manner in which other people use related words, concepts and utterances. Through dialogue young people therefore grapple with the utterances of others, as they reflect on their own use of terms and generate appropriate responses, using the concepts and words at their disposal.

#### 'Fusing horizons': resonating with the words of others

In order for Rosemary Gardens' youth to orient themselves towards various utterances and find corresponding places for these words in their own repertoires, other people's words need to resonate with something in their personal experience or imagination. Gadamer (1975), using his own conceptualisation of hermeneutic theory, writes that understanding in dialogue involves metaphorically building a bridge in order to transcend the hiatus between what initially appears as two distinct 'horizons'. These different horizons represent gaps in understanding generated by lacunae between the past and the present, or between our own perspectives and the opinions of other people. The fusion of

horizons requires a form of linguistic mediation, involving a transfer of language and meaning from one horizon to the other, such that something common is expressed. In this manner knowledge is co-constructed. The knowledge that is created through this form of verbal consciousness lies in generating similarities between two separate but related concepts, perspectives or historical contexts. The metaphor of a horizon demonstrates that this process involves points of view or 'lenses' that allow one to interpret the relative differences between what is 'near and far', providing perspective on the relationships between words and concepts (Gadamer, 1975). In order to do this, a person needs to be able to connect their experiences or words to a new experience or perspective, such that the similarities are observed and understood. This does not mean that a generic, universal experience or concept is attained through this comparison, but rather that a person's previous conceptualisation is refined (Gadamer, 1975).

#### 'Whittling with words': refining concepts

Understanding, therefore, always includes an element of refining concepts. It is through dialogue, language and conceptual understanding that young people actively perform the communication of situated meanings (Gadamer, 1975). A concept is an abstract generalisation that refers to a class of experiences, objects or ideas (Medin & Smith, 1984; Medin, 1989). Concepts are not merely symbols that directly refer to corresponding instances or examples that exist in the world. Rather, they represent an amalgamation of related objects or ideas. For example, the concept 'cold' solidifies in the mind of a child after experiencing being naked when the temperature is low, being outside in the wind or when recalling the feeling in his or her hand while holding a block of ice. Through the sum total of these different experiences the child develops a general concept of 'cold'.

This is continually refined as the young person experiences 'cold' in different contexts. A 'chair' illustrates another example of a concept. Through observing what people utilize for seating around the kitchen table, what holds the body while watching television and what exists in the waiting room for the doctor, a child will learn the meaning of the concept 'chair'. A concept therefore refers to a set of

cases of a particular 'thing' that become generalised or envisioned as a class of objects or experiences, over time (Medin & Smith, 1984; Medin, 1989). These conceptual understandings are continually refined.

These two examples of concepts, namely 'cold' and 'chair' are not emphatically dialogical; they are everyday concepts and are largely informed by the empirical experiences of individuals. Conceptual understanding is refined, dialogically, through the interaction of utterances between people, such that understanding of a concept is questioned, collectively, and the experiences of others may add to or evolve understanding amongst the group. For example, a person may understand the concept of 'democracy' to mean the political situation in a nation-state once voting for a government has been completed. Somebody may ask this person whether forms of democracy exist in relation to groups that do not involve nation states. The concept of social rights, as opposed to political rights, may be introduced to the discussion on democracy and similar concepts, such as 'justice' and 'liberty' could be compared to 'democracy'. The comparison of related concepts, within a conceptual network, and the existence of a range of examples from different socio-historical contexts and on larger and smaller scales, stimulate conceptual learning, through dialogues that involve multiple people. This process is therefore a fundamentally social one that involves a connection or bridge between different people's understandings of a concept or idea. In this way something common is expressed, but not something identical.

Dialogue is therefore integrally related to concept formation and ascertaining the shared meaning of concepts, which is linked to the contexts in which these terms are used. Young people come to understand utterances and concepts through observing and listening to how they are used in the particular contexts in which these linguistic constructions have meaning. Contexts are actually formed by composite sets of utterances, perspectives and ideologies, what Bakhtin refers to as 'heteroglossia'. Heteroglossia is the 'base condition' for a dialogue, upon which any single utterance is contingent (Bakhtin, 1981). The meaning of a word uttered in a certain time and place may change when stated in a different situation

because the context in which the word is used maintains prevalence over the particular words that are spoken. Youth learning through dialogue therefore requires an understanding of how concepts acquire meaning and how they make sense, in the contexts in which these terms are used.

In my three sites I listened to and observed how young people engaged in dialogues with others, exchanges that explored the meaning of new and existing concepts. My analysis focused on the kinds of concepts that were introduced, debated and discussed, as well as the manner in which conceptual debate and discussion occurred. As stated, this involved explicating how young people found corresponding 'words' of their own, as they engaged with concepts in these three places. *In the classroom* I examined how concepts were introduced and formed part of lessons. *At Youth Amplified* the materials with which the group engaged, such as documentaries, written pieces and interviews, generated a range of concepts to be used in discussions. *Doodvenootskap* members' interactions with Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and global hip-hop culture, as well as their written lyrics, provided insight into the ways in which these young people developed their conceptual repertoires through interactions with others.

#### 'Double-voicedness': appropriating the words of others

One component of dialogism therefore involves people engaging with the concepts and utterances of others, that is to say, they attempt to 'build a bridge' and link common understanding, as they 'orient' themselves towards statements. This may lead to young people appropriating the words of others, incorporating them into their own repertoires. Bakhtin (1981) calls this process 'double-voicedness'. Double-voicedness refers to integrating the words of another into one's own set of linguistic resources. For example, a student may hear a word used by a teacher without understanding its meaning. The child could then ask a parent to explain the meaning of the word and s/he may provide them with a different explanation. Over time they attempt to amalgamate these perspectives or voices into their own words, 'fusing these different horizons' (Gadamer, 1975) through the process of 'double-voicedness'. The words that are appropriated are always partly theirs, partly somebody else's, partly the product of the historical

context. The process of “ideological becoming”, by which Bakhtin means the process of conceptual development and not political ideology formation, is partially constituted through using discretion, in order to integrate the words of others into one’s own voice (Bakhtin, 1981: 348).

Double-voicedness is the goal when young people attempt to explain a concept or theory in ‘their own words’. The successful completion of this task demonstrates that the essence of the concept or theory has been understood, through using one’s own language to describe the words of another. Understanding is demonstrated through assimilating knowledge into one’s own epistemological systems and frameworks and explaining concepts in one’s own terms, not simply reiterating the thinking of somebody else (Alexander, 2008). In order for learning to occur it is therefore vital that young people actively think for themselves and do not merely report the thoughts of other people (Nystrand, 1997). However, it is also important that they listen to, and understand, what others say, as this provides different perspectives and expands young people’s discursive and linguistic repertoires. In each of the three places of this multi-site ethnography I analysed how young people engage with the words of others, as they try to produce utterances of their own. Double-voicedness is achieved and learning takes place when young people do not simply mimic other people’s words, but rather succeed in utilising the core meaning of these utterances to produce words that are partly other people’s, but also contain something different and new. The fact that these words are both partly theirs and partly other people’s underlines the social nature of the dialogic learning process, exemplified in this instance by the concept of ‘double-voicedness’.

A substantial component of dialogic learning therefore consists of young people assessing different perspectives, as well as using corresponding words, concepts and utterances, in order to make links between the utterances of other people and their own positions. This requires comparing concepts to similar words, with slightly different meanings, and considering the diverse contexts in which these concepts are used, thus refining subjective understandings. Language, with its plethora of linguistic constructions, provides a valuable means for recasting concepts in a new light, in conversation with others. However, language is not a



‘neutral’ medium, simply conveying words that denote objective phenomena. Language is imbued with subtle forms of power and status, something that requires careful consideration.

### **The operations of power**

#### **The standardisation of languages**

The ways in which young people learn through dialogue are substantially influenced by the feedback they receive from others regarding the value of their utterances. Through the words that people use, their accents and ways of speaking, what Bourdieu (1991) called their ‘linguistic habitus’, people convey their place in the social structure. This process, of people’s words being evaluated, is related to the manner in which language works at a broader societal level. The systematic attribution of power and status to particular varieties of language that exist within a linguistic market, varieties that have become institutionally supported and nationally/internationally recognised, can be traced historically to the development of nation states. While linguists generally assume that language, their object or domain of study, is a unified and coherent system, Bourdieu (1991) shows how particular varieties of language became standardised with the attached status of ‘the official language’, through historical, social and political events. Bourdieu (1991) argues that the process of linguistic unification in France was related to the development of the modern state. From the fourteenth century onwards the language used in elite Parisian circles was elevated to the status of the official language and was widely used in written form, while other regional and rural dialects were classified as forms of *patois*, with relatively lower status (Bourdieu, 1991). Thus, from the sixteenth century many people within the French upper classes, who could read, had learnt both the official language and a local dialect, while peasants and the French rural poor only spoke a local dialect. The policy of linguistic unification and the development of a national language, after the French revolution, therefore primarily benefitted the upper classes and petite bourgeoisie, as they already spoke this language. In England there was arguably no standard form of English in the Middle English Period (1150-1500) (Mesthrie, Swann, Deumert & Leap, 2009). Thereafter, the variety of English

spoken in the political and economic centre of London, as well the English used in the academic centres of Oxford and Cambridge, formed a prestigious geographical triangle in the East Midlands within which the basis for standardised, modern forms of English were agreed upon (Mesthrie et al, 2009). These examples illustrate how socio-political factors generally determine the value of a variety of a language, rather than linguistic criteria (Mesthrie et al, 2009).

The state, and other powerful, often related social structures and institutions use these standardised forms of language to differentiate and determine the value of particular types of utterances, as well as to endorse certain linguistic conventions and practices. For example, governments regulate the linguistic market through policies of mass schooling, as future citizens are taught to speak in specific ways that are conceived and administered by the modern state. Through the education system, particular institutions facilitate the accumulation and acquisition of linguistic capital, as well as conferring formal qualifications, such that these forms of linguistic capital are not evenly distributed (Bourdieu, 1991). Linguistic competence is therefore not only based on the adequate performance of a predefined set of criteria, but is linked to historically contingent power relations (Bourdieu, 1991).

The relationship between language acquisition, its use, population governance and the workings of power is evident in the linguistic history of Cape Town and therefore, the three places I am studying. A short summary follows. When the Dutch arrived at the Cape in 1652 to establish a refreshment station between Europe and the Dutch East Indies, two distinct groups, the Khoi and the San, inhabited the area (McCormick, 2002). Between 1652 and 1795 (which began the period of British colonial rule, although a transition period lasted until 1815), the Dutch language dominated the new settlement, although Khoi was regularly heard in the city. By the end of the 1700s it was unusual to hear Khoi in Cape Town, as smallpox and colonial rule had destroyed most of its speakers (McCormick, 2002). The language of Dutch slaves from other parts of Africa and Asia added to the linguistic flavour of Dutch ruled Cape Town (McCormick, 2002). Portuguese creole was particularly common during the eighteenth century amongst Malay slaves and those from the Indian and East African coasts

(McCormick, 2002). A great deal of contact between languages therefore occurred at the Dutch East India Company (DEIC) slave lodge, at DEIC employees' homes and on farms. It was common for up to five languages to be spoken in an eighteenth century household (McCormick, 2002). These social relations resulted in changes to the Dutch that was spoken.

British rule from 1795 onwards coincided with freedom of religion and the increased influence of Islam in the city (McCormick, 2002). By the beginning of 1800 one fifth of Cape Town was Muslim, with Cape Dutch or Afrikaans becoming the dominant language for interactions between Muslim people in the early 1800s (McCormick, 2002). Although English became the language of government, finance and commerce, attempts to Anglicise the society were mainly aimed at the middle and upper classes. Thus, despite English speakers assuming political and economic supremacy and the number of immigrants from the Netherlands decreasing, Cape Dutch continued to grow and comprised the home language for most of the slave descendants and Muslim population (McCormick, 2002). Cape Dutch was even used as a medium of instruction in many Madrasahs (McCormick, 2002). Slavery was abolished in 1834, with 5607 slaves or 29% of the city's population being freed. Most of those manumitted spoke Cape Dutch as their home language. Immigration rose in Cape Town after the inland mineral discoveries- diamonds in Kimberly in 1867 and gold on the Witwatersrand in 1886- further increasing the mixture of languages used in Cape Town.

However, a new set of linguistic dynamics unfolded with the political and economic events of the twentieth century, events that influenced the attitudes of the Cape Town underclasses to different languages and determined the particular form that standardised Afrikaans assumed. In the late nineteenth century a 'White'-led movement campaigning for Afrikaans to be officially recognised, culminated in this group's version of the language becoming a medium of instruction in schools from 1914 and, along with Dutch and English, an official national language in 1926 (McCormick, 2002). Increased linguistic divergence between 'White' and 'non-White' Afrikaans speakers was caused by political events and apartheid legislation. The Population Registration Act classified 'Coloured' people as second-class citizens, the Group Areas Act (1950) led to the

removal of people from areas like District Six and in 1951 'Coloured' voters were struck off the common voter's roll. Between 1966 and 1980, 60 000 people were removed from District Six, with almost all of the houses and shops bulldozed to the ground. 150 000 people were forced to relocate from the city centre to areas like Rosemary Gardens (<http://www.capetown.at/heritage/city/district%206.htm>). These events meant that Afrikaners were increasingly perceived as the oppressors by people classified as 'Coloured', 'Indian' or 'Black'.

Thus, the standardisation of Afrikaans, by 'Whites', excluded the Afrikaans spoken by 'Coloured' and 'Black' speakers (Battersby, 2003). The Afrikaans that has been standardised and is used in school curricula is the culmination of the Afrikaner nationalist movement's attempts to entrench political and economic power. On the other hand, Kaapse Afrikaans is a creole language that is largely spoken by working-class Capetonians (Stone, 1991; 1995). This language formed as a result of the multiple cosmopolitan spaces in which slaves moved, the role of Islam at the Cape and the Cape's divided history of English and Dutch colonial rule. 'White' Afrikaners resisted the mixing of English and Afrikaans, or for that matter standardised Afrikaans and any other language, due to their political project (McCormick, 2002). However, 'Coloured' people in Cape Town had a very different political, and hence linguistic agenda, contributing to their use of a different form of Afrikaans.

This very brief historical overview is not meant to imply that two kinds of Afrikaans exist and that they can be neatly categorised and understood as spoken along racial lines, with 'Coloured' South Africans speaking one version of this language and 'White' South Africans another. It is, rather, an attempt to demonstrate that languages are heteroglot products that emerge over time. The particular set of utterances and ways of using them that make up the version of the Afrikaans language that has become standardised and used in the school curriculum, does not represent the full range of utterances or the ways in which this language is utilised by all of its speakers.

Kaapse Afrikaans is based on frequent code-switching, with difficulties arising in classifying whether certain utterances should be classified as informal English or

Afrikaans (McCormick, 2002). Rap artist Ready D says that writing a dictionary of what he calls “gamtaal”<sup>4</sup> would be impossible due to its changing nature and the fact that it is so malleable in different spaces, such as prisons, communities, schools and homes (quoted in Marlin-Curiel, 2003: 71).

The language spoken by young people from Rosemary Gardens is inherited from this linguistic legacy of the Cape Town underclasses. Rosemary Gardens was established through the removal of people classified as ‘Coloured’, from areas like District Six and other parts of the Cape Town inner city and suburbs. Most of these people spoke (and their descendants continue to speak) Kaapse Afrikaans as their home language, mixed with and in addition to informal English. The fact that different varieties of a language, as well as different ways of speaking, are differentially valued means that the utterances of Rosemary Gardens youth will be interpreted as having different levels of worth. Negative evaluations of their language, by peers and adults, can be particularly damaging to the confidence of these working-class youth and their dialogic learning. Youth have access to different forms of language and they become adept at using these across a variety of contexts (Gee, 1996; Stubbs, 2002). Young people’s attempts to learn through inserting their forms of language into dialogues may therefore be supported and/or thwarted by feedback that they receive regarding the social value of their utterances, as these are positioned within the linguistic market.

An aspect of my analysis has therefore involved documenting how peers and adults responded to and evaluated the utterances of Rosemary Gardens youth, in the three places, and how these assessments affect the young people’s dialogic learning. Bourdieu adds that “the imposition of legitimacy is greater” (Bourdieu, 1991:69) and the linguistic market favours to a greater extent those who hold what is construed as the greatest linguistic competence, as the situation becomes more formal. In these situations, those who have been conferred with status to monitor unspoken linguistic laws, such as teachers in the school context, may enforce the rules of “linguistic price formation” (Bourdieu, 1991:70). The

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<sup>4</sup> ‘Gam’ is a derogatory word for lower-class, from ‘ham’. Gamtaal means lower-class language.

**Table 3.** Rosemary Gardens Languages

| Language      | People | % of total population |
|---------------|--------|-----------------------|
| Afrikaans     | 23041  | 81.33%                |
| English       | 5215   | 18.41%                |
| isiXhosa      | 40     | 0.14%                 |
| Other African | 33     | 0.12%                 |

Source: Stats SA Census 2001

conventions and codes that determine the value of utterances in dialogue therefore oscillated depending on how formal a place is considered to be, with other spatialising forces also influencing an utterance's worth. In my analysis I carefully monitored how the linguistic market operated and how the three different places mediated the value of young people's utterances.

To sum up, dialogic learning in the different places of this project is shaped by the ways in which Rosemary Gardens' youth use language, a social product that is inherited from the past and necessarily reformulated in the present, in order to contribute utterances to dialogues with other people. Concept development and interacting with the words of others therefore occurs within the social economy of language, through which young people's utterances are evaluated based on their linguistic habitus and the particular varieties of language that they use. Negative evaluations of their linguistic habitus may have long-lasting, detrimental effects on young people's confidence and willingness to partake in similar dialogues in the future. Dialogic learning therefore involves young people using forms of language in interactions with others, both to reflect on their own understandings of concepts and ideas and in order to be exposed to new ones. This plays out within the

operations of language as a social system, one that differentially evaluates kinds of utterances and ways of speaking.

### 'From above and below': centripetal and centrifugal language forces

Despite these systemic linguistic power relations favouring the speech of certain groups, power, as Foucault (1980) pointed out, is always positioned in a relationship with concomitant forms of resistance. In relation to language, power is therefore disputed between different competing forces, influencing how languages change or remain static. This relationship of linguistic power-resistance is demonstrated by Bakhtin's (1981) description of language as a divided system that is constituted through, amongst other things, 'centripetal' forces from above and 'centrifugal' forces from below. Centripetal forces are the official, elite forms of a language that attempt to unify it as a structure, creating a fixed order and canonising linguistic styles (Gardiner, 1992). Centripetal forces function to maintain social privileges of dominant groups by demarcating borders between legitimate and illegitimate language forms (Gardiner, 1992). Militating against these centripetal forces, centrifugal forces from below, in the form of, for example, everyday uses of language on the streets and in the marketplace, contest the legitimacy of 'official' uses of language (Gardiner, 2000). Languages are therefore always fragmented, multiplicitous, contested systems containing different competing, heteroglot forces.

These categories of 'centripetal' and 'centrifugal' should not be seen as rigid, fixed 'boxes' that contain unified portions of language and culture, or as operating in uniform ways in particular places. Centripetal/centrifugal language forces need to be interpreted as often containing paradoxical effects. They provide a tool for analysing the workings of language, communication and power relations, as they intersect in particular places, inducing linguistic stasis and/or change, often in complex ways.

Like language as a whole system, centrifugal and centripetal forces also function to communicate subtle messages to young people about the status of the places in which learning takes place, as well as the relationship between the status of these places and young people's place in the social hierarchy. The interaction between young people's socially situated identities and centrifugal or centripetal forces can be particularly detrimental to students' self-esteem when language forces insinuate that the status of the language that learners utilise, for example at home, is inferior or inadequate when it is used at school. Language is an intimate component of our identities; it is the first medium of identity that 'speaks' to us when we are still in the womb and hear our mother's voice (Delpit, 2002). Should the school denigrate the home language of students and therefore, by association, insult those to whom students are most intimately connected, this is likely to result in students devaluing schooling. It could also possibly lead to young people lowering their perceptions of their families and ultimately, then, themselves. My analysis therefore delved into young people's interpretations of and responses to centrifugal/centripetal language forces and how these interactions impacted on whether or not learning took place.

These language forces from above and below do not work in predictable ways and it should not be assumed that language will operate in a predetermined manner in different places. Schools are traditional, state administered institutions with a particular history in the South African context, but they are now dominated by a policy context that contains liberal notions of 'child-centred pedagogies' and 'learner voice'. This may enable centripetal forces from below to operate in the school place. Hip-hop is related to a radically different set of histories and has been used both as a medium for 'youth voice' and political resistance, as well as a commercialised product of the corporate media, with highly patriarchal, violent connotations. The heteroglot set of utterances produced by learners from different schools, in the Youth Amplified place, will result in the RGHS learners being exposed to yet another set of centripetal/centrifugal forces. The language forces that operate in a particular place are therefore always heteroglot and divided, imbued with power and status from above and below, impacting on young people's participation in and contributions towards dialogues.



Centripetal/centrifugal forces provide helpful conceptual devices to aid in the exploration of how young people's localised utterances interact with social forces and power relations from above and below, in the three different but interlinked places.

#### Authoritative and internally persuasive discourses

Centripetal language forces are more likely to be authoritative in nature, whereas centrifugal currents of language often resemble what Bakhtin (1981) called internally persuasive discourses, although this trend is by no means an absolute one. It needs to be clarified from the outset that Bakhtin's notion of 'discourse' differs, subtly, from Foucauldian understandings of the same term. Foucault (1980) was interested in how power and knowledge coalesce to form 'truth regimes' or *discourses* in particular historical contexts. Although Bakhtin was certainly interested in the operations of power and also in unearthing how language relates to forms of knowledge, his use of the term *discourse* was more immediately concerned with the relationship between different utterances that comprise forms of communication. Particularly, his use of the term *discourse* explores the manner in which sets of utterances interact, whether such utterances 'invite a response', or if, alternatively, they present themselves as 'finished products' or 'stand alone truths'. To elaborate, authoritative discourse, in Bakhtin's terms, exists in a form that demands acknowledgement, it is a given and may be thought of as the "word of the father", that which is not questioned or able to be reformulated (Bakhtin, 1981: 342-346). This form of discourse insists on unconditional loyalty to its content and values, as well as decreeing a taboo in terms of playing with its content or the manner in which it is contextually framed. Authoritative discourse must be completely accepted or rejected; it can only be transmitted, not represented (Bakhtin, 1981). In terms of its content, it is often associated with notions of 'tradition', the 'official line' or in the acknowledged truths of, for example, religion or science.

By contrast, internally persuasive discourse is pivotal for dialogic learning, as it arises through challenging people's existing ideas (Bakhtin, 1981). This is not

generally a threatening process and often involves forms of play or new modes and means of representation. An internally persuasive word therefore catalyses new and different words in a person's conceptual repertoire through a process that is productive and imaginative (Bakhtin, 1981). Through internally persuasive discourse a person learns to represent the discourse of others in new and inventive ways. Internally persuasive words are therefore experimented with and moderately changed in orientation, as people envisage how these words, ideas and discourses might be used in their own formulations.

Authoritative and internally persuasive discourses are not inherently 'good' or 'bad' and often stimulate thinking and learning when used strategically and in combination (Matusov, 2007). In some instances, young people need first to be exposed to new ideas in a coherent and structured manner before they are able to play with and amend these forms of knowledge. Internally persuasive discourses may therefore not be productive or helpful without young people first being introduced to sets of ideas that form the basis for subsequent forms of experimentation. However, places where authoritative discourses operate exclusively can function to silence young people, resulting in boredom, feelings of inadequacy and a lack of agency. The ways in which authoritative and internally persuasive discourses function to shape forms of dialogue provides another tool for analysing how power and language suppress or catalyse young people's utterances, in relation to the different places of this project.

### Speech Genres

Over time, the workings of centrifugal/centripetal language forces and authoritative/internally persuasive discourses become stabilised within particular contexts and within spheres of communication. In this way these forms of communication, mediated by the operations of power, become recognised as specific cultural products. For example, in modern Western culture a particular form of dialogue occurs in the context of a job interview. A specific set of utterances is exchanged as the prospective employer asks questions, usually beginning with a general inquiry related to the interviewee's background, moving

on to their professional experience and expectations in relation to the employment position being advertised. The interviewee is expected to respond to these questions in particular ways.

Bakhtin used the term 'speech genres' to describe how utterances are structured into an organised configuration, resulting in certain categories of utterances becoming stabilised, with associated content, styles, forms of intentionality, intonation and social evaluation (Gardiner, 1992). Speech genres are norms that develop through repeated uses of language in particular situations or spheres and are observed in greetings, ways of addressing others, style of speech and word usage, amongst other things. The social position of speakers, and the personal relationships contained in any given dialogue, also shape speech genres (Bakhtin, 1986). While a genre, in general terms, is a set of expectations that apply to a set of text types, my analysis explores the ways in which different speech genres or expectations around speech operate in different learning places. Speech genres emerge in learning places through the historically contingent norms, values, acceptable practices and taboos that govern actions. The culture and history of learning places may impact on the speech genres that emerge and the ways in which utterances and everyday forms of language are transformed into various cultural products.

As an example of a speech genre, related to one of my three learning places, cross-cultural and international research has found that over two thirds of classroom talk can be depicted by a speech genre characterised as 'information, response and feedback' (IRF) (Flanders, 1970; Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975). In the form of IRF, an educator typically initiates social interactions in the classroom, the students then respond to what was initiated and the educator provides them with feedback in terms of their responses. The educator controls this speech genre, limiting spontaneous dialogue, or learning based on student-initiated discourse. Through IRF type interactions young people are positioned as automatons that largely fulfil the predesigned curriculum delivery plans of the educator. Broader educational forces, such as policy regulations that focus on standardisation of the

curriculum and predetermined learning outcomes, as well as forms of surveillance, such as how students are positioned in classroom seating configurations, substantially influence the production of IRF-type speech patterns in the classroom place (Flanders, 1970; Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975).

Some classroom-based interventions have tried to experiment with changing the predominance of IRF type speech genres, in classrooms. This has largely comprised of introducing and developing small groupwork strategies for students. Such interventions usually introduce students to 'ground rules', which are the norms, values and practices that emerge or are instilled in a given place (Dawes, Mercer & Wegerif, 2004; Mercer & Littleton, 2007). Ground rules, as they occur in these classroom interventions, attempt to encourage students to take turns speaking, listen to others, encourage asking questions and giving reasons for opinions (Dawes, Mercer & Wegerif, 2004).

This body of research on 'classroom talk' found that the different ways in which young people position themselves, in relation to others, affect group learning. Youth may position themselves in competition with one another, they may simply agree with one another, or their individual identities could be suspended in the interests of the best argument 'winning'. These kinds of talk have been labelled as 'disputational', 'cumulative' and 'exploratory' talk respectively (Mercer, 2005; Mercer & Littleton, 2007; Rojas-Drummond & Mercer, 2004; Wegerif & Mercer, 1997).

Disputational talk involves the speaker defining him or herself through differentiation between themselves and others and the talk becomes a competitive game. In cumulative talk speakers define themselves through identifying and integrating their opinions with those of others in the group and values of cooperation, compliance and group harmony are the goals of the interaction. In exploratory talk competition exists, but it is between ideas and not between people (Wegerif & Mercer, 1997). In forms of exploratory talk the best argument wins and this is a communal achievement that occurs through synergy

between members of the group. Thus, in the case of disputational talk, individual learners are positioned in opposition to the group, cumulative talk involves the group displaying solidarity between individuals and, in the case of exploratory talk, identities are suspended in the interests of engaging with different ideas and forms of knowledge.

Wegerif & Mercer (1997) argue that exploratory talk is most productive for educational settings, as it offers students opportunities to think collectively and find new ways of interpreting already existing conceptual frameworks and knowledge (Barnes, 2008). Exploratory talk creates a safe space in which participants may experiment with putting ideas into words, free from the threat of belittlement from others. Disputational talk may lead to destructive conflict that militates against dialogic learning, whereas cumulative talk has produced forms of acquiescence that, similarly, do not stimulate learning. Exploratory talk is theorised as underpinned by what Habermas (1990) has called the 'ideal speech situation', a state of affairs in which every participant is assumed to have the equal right to participate and to question claims that are made (Habermas 1990; Wegerif, 2008). In the ideal speech situation, 'rational' debates are strived for, discussions that are intended not to be hampered by individuals physically or emotionally coercing others in the group. Decisions are made based on rational agreement amongst the group, as people debate which perspectives contain the most value.

The core ideas that inform these types of classroom talk apply to other places, outside of the classroom. Norms, values, and prescribed behaviours, and the ways in which participants orient themselves towards others, in dialogue, influence how they act out their utterances and whether or not collective forms of learning take place. It should be emphasised that the particular shape that speech genres assume and the effects that they produce, in the three places studied in this project, are not predetermined. For example, the youth radio show could become a place where learners from different schools compete with one another individually and collectively, resulting in conflict and tension, or it could develop

into a place where ideas are built upon and cooperation between learners is evident. Hip-hop 'beefing and battling' can produce a culture of conflict and denigration, however lyrics can alternatively be used critically to question young people's position in society and create new group identities. Speech genres, in the three places, are also likely to oscillate depending on the specific context or occasion.

## **Conclusion**

Dialogic learning unfolds as young people expand their conceptual repertoires and experiment with and appropriate the words of others. These endeavours occur within the workings of language as a social system, one that infuses different utterances with status, based on historical and political factors. Language is mediated by power through the ways in which some utterances operate from above, militating against change and linguistic experimentation, whereas other utterances, which originate from below, drive the evolution of languages. Some of these sets of utterances are exerted authoritatively, implying that they are unchangeable truths that do not encourage responses. Other utterances intermingle such that they invite answers from one another, forming internally persuasive discourses. Over time, sets of utterances may form stable patterns, or recognisable cultural products, called speech genres (Bakhtin, 1986). Thus, dialogic learning is not predetermined, but emerges relationally through uses of language, multiple perspectives, ideologies, power relations and associated contexts that change over time.

Intersecting utterances, which are mediated by forms of power, partly produce the contexts in which they play out. As Bakhtin (1981: 272) said "the authentic environment of an utterance...*is* dialogised heteroglossia", implying that heteroglossia is made up of individual utterances, constituting the context within which any single utterance has meaning. Utterances are therefore always contingent on the heteroglot social contexts in which they are uttered. The utterances of Rosemary Gardens youth need to be analysed in relation to the

contexts or places in which they take shape, places which are themselves dialogical, populated with, and comprised of, heteroglot utterances (Bakhtin, 1981). While this chapter has focussed on *dialogic learning*, the next will unpack *the places* in which it does or does not happen.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **LEARNING PLACES**

*If time is the dimension in which things happen one after the other, it's the dimension of succession, then space is the dimension of things being, existing at the same time: of simultaneity. It's the dimension of multiplicity. Now what that means is that space is the dimension that presents us with the existence of the other...that means it is space that presents us with the question of the social. And it presents us with the most fundamental of political questions, which is how are we going to live together.*

Doreen Massey interview

<http://www.socialsciencespace.com/2013/02/podcastdoreen-massey-on-space/>

*Consider a house, and a street, for example. The house has six storeys and an air of stability about it. One might almost see it as the epitome of immobility, with its concrete and its stark, cold and rigid outlines . . . Now, a critical analysis would doubtless destroy the appearance of solidity of this house, stripping it, as it were, of its concrete slabs and its thin non-load-bearing walls, which are really glorified screens, and uncovering a very different picture. In the light of this imaginary analysis, our house would emerge as permeated from every direction by streams of energy which run in and out of it by every imaginable route: water, gas, electricity, telephone lines, radio and television signals, and so on. Its image of immobility would then be replaced by an image of a complex of mobilities, a nexus of in and out conduits.*

Lefebvre, 1991: 92–93



**'Places without borders': sets of social relations combining to form learning places**

My research explores how Rosemary Gardens' youth learn through dialogue in different places, meaning that the notion of 'place', as it relates to dialogic learning, needs to be unpacked further. I have already shown how language functions in different context specific ways, as language, power and status are all contingent to the places in which language is used. Place also impacts on the structure or form of dialogue, as particular 'kinds' of dialogues that repeatedly manifest in specific places become recognisable cultural products. Place, then, is intimately related to language and culture, social phenomena that inscribe particular sites with meaning and significance.

These social elements of place illuminate that the way in which I am using this term does not only refer to a physical zone with a perimeter around it. I am developing a notion of place that is not analogous to a 'place' as it is understood in Euclidian geometry, as a location that may be pinpointed on a two-dimensional Cartesian plane, a physical grid with x and y axes. Places are actually produced through sets of social relations or socio-spatial practices (Lefebvre, 1991). For example, relations between teachers and students partly produce classrooms, as an empty room with desks would not suffice to define many of the core characteristics of this place. Through intersubjective interactions, relations between people, places are actually constituted, in a comprehensively social manner.

Place is therefore inseparable from time, as places do not pre-exist social relations. Assuming that places are ready-made physical settings, within which learning practices happen, excludes a range of interpretations that illuminate how and why these places 'got there' in the first place, something that I wish to avoid (Sheehy & Leander, 2004). Place is tied to the past because at the moment when sets of historically situated relations become inscribed in the form of a geographical location, they begin to be officially recognized as 'a place' and, in

turn, develop associated norms, values and power relations (Sheehy & Leander, 2004).

Thus, places are better understood as junctions or points of intersection within networks of social relations, where a large proportion of those social relations primarily occur outside of the geographical location associated with the place in question (Massey, 1991; 1994). RGHS, the Doodvenootskap and Youth Amplified are not nostalgic, essentialised products of long, internalized histories related to nation, neighbourhood or region. Instead, these places are porous and evolving constellations of social relations that meet and interlock in a particular locus, at a specific moment (Massey, 1994; 2005). Places are in flux, they comprise particular mixtures of unbounded social relations that are historically situated and they interact and change over time.

The composition of these social relations, and the ways in which they intersect with other social forces, will substantially shape how learning occurs at RGHS, Youth Amplified and DVS. Places such as schools do not exist like enclosed containers, separated from neighbourhoods and home environments; they contain porous boundaries and inter-connected networks of social relations through which they are constituted and evolve (Dolby & Rivzi, 2007; Fataar, 2007). Learning in the three places is therefore mediated, inhibited, enhanced and produced by sets of social relations that exist both inside and beyond the geographical areas often associated with these places. To illustrate this point, young people arrive at school from homes that contain caregivers, siblings and particular economic circumstances. They travel to school through neighbourhoods with specific social problems and resources. Children and youth live out their school careers with peers whom they also cohabit other places on weekends and after school, in the neighbourhoods and cities in which they reside. Schools are connected to education departments that devise curricula and prescribe the behaviour of school personnel; they are components of nations that shape educational policy documents and, in the process, envision their ideal citizenry.

Consequently, it is not only what happens within, for example classrooms, that is of significance for learning, but what connects these learning places to practice

networks and other sites beyond their walls (Nespor, 1997). Schools and neighbourhoods exist in relation to cities and countries that are shaped by broader social, historical and political forces, phenomena that comprise their existence in the first place (Nespor, 1997). Nespor (1997) suggests that education should not be perceived solely in terms of the activities that happen at schools, but as the fluid processes that intersect in this place. Schools are strategic junctions in the web of time-space relations that constitute the lives of young people. Learning therefore takes place throughout an interconnected nexus of locales that encompass the totality of young people's lives and the classroom is only one piece of this complex labyrinth.

Similarly, in looking at the other two places that make up this project, Youth Amplified was created through the intersection of a range of other places and social relations, including four schools in the Cape Town metropole, the neighbourhoods that the young participants inhabit, the community radio station, Cape Town itself and the moment that was post-apartheid South Africa in 2011 and 2012. The third place, the Doodvenootskap, was produced and evolved through interactions in the community of Rosemary Gardens, relations with NGOs that operate in this neighbourhood and the ways in which global hip-hop culture is practiced locally. Learning places therefore need to be seen in relation to the range of social relations and practices that produce these places.

### **'Tripping on trialectics': places produced through three forms of space**

A place therefore refers to a particular moment through which sets of social relations intersect, while 'space', refers to broader spatialising effects that operate in relation to history and society more generally. Sheehy & Leander (2004) argue that space needs to be thought of as a verb, for example 'spatialising' literacy practices and not as a noun, hence avoiding static metaphorical uses of space like 'borders', 'margins' and 'centers'. The production of space is a historical and social process that is continually in flux, leading Lefebvre (1991) to conclude that spatiality, sociality and historicity are continually and necessarily enveloped

within one another. One way of exploring how space and social relations are in flux in a systemic, societal manner, with implications for learning, is through Lefebvre's (1991) conceptual triad of Real, Imagined and Lived moments of social space (Soja, 1996). These three forms of social space or spatial patterns are superimposed upon one another and operate symbiotically in the three places I am visiting. They are not independent 'forms of space' and we cannot study one without making reference to the other two. These spatial forms intersect in specific moments to form places.

Real space is perceived as containing a concrete materiality that may be empirically mapped (Soja, 1996). It is observed in the relations of production and reproduction that create the ongoing routines of everyday life. Real space is embedded in transport routes and living arrangements, enmeshed with the labour market, domestic life and the migration of populations (Lefebvre, 1991). Real space is perceived by geographers as the space where activities are assumed to occur, for example 'the school', 'the classroom' or the 'education department offices' and is associated with particular events and social practices. Individuals also perceive this form of space, for example, in the ways in which one commonly regards ongoing routine activities, such as a trip from the classroom to the principal's office (Leander, 2001).

Imagined space manifests in a particular society's ideas and representations of space (Soja, 1996). It is the languages, discourses, signs and texts that comprise the dominant spatial forms of any society. It is apparent in forms of communication, visual imagery and other codified interactions between people. Imagined or conceived space is the planned space that is envisioned by architects and scientists. This form of space is dominated by ideology, as it manifests through language and other communication devices that are shaped by power relations (Sheehy & Leander, 2004). A good example of a representation of space, an Imagined spatial form, is a map (Leander, 2001).

Lived space is produced through combinations of Real and Imagined space and it is also independent of these other spatial formations (Lefebvre, 1991). Lived space contains forms of agency, as it is produced by people negotiating their way

through Real and Imagined space. As people 'live' in different learning places they exert agency through combining and recreating forms of Real and Imagined space. Lived space is both independent from the other two forms of space and it is produced in the interstices of these different forms (Soja, 1996). In places like classrooms, communities and talk-radio shows, young people are inserted within routines of spatial practices, Real economic constraints, Imagined structures like race and language, but they also exert agency as they 'live' these places from day to day. Lived space delves into the clandestine or underground aspects of social life (Lefebvre, 1991). It is the manner in which the imagination, upon experiencing the spatial workings of power, seeks to alter and reappropriate space, often through art or non-verbal signs and symbols. Lived space breaks spatial rules, patterns and rhythms, it is irregular and fragmented (Lefebvre, 1991). Social relations that constitute places are therefore not only constituted in a top down manner or produced through macro societal forces, but they are also manufactured out of people's micro, everyday relations and practices.

Other research that describes how Real, Imagined and Lived space intersect to form similar learning places to the ones that I have researched, are explored in more detail below. This research is combined with contextual information related to the history of my three places. The histories of these places help to understand better the ways in which various social relations and forms of space shape learning.

### **'....Place, Rosemary & Time': Rosemary Gardens High School as a place of learning**

#### **Real space, learning and Rosemary Gardens High School**

Almost all of the learners that attend RGHS reside in the surrounding neighbourhood of Rosemary Gardens or the informal settlements that have

evolved out of this neighbourhood. Understanding learning at RGHS therefore requires some background in terms of the Real spatial practices that led to the genesis, development and current conditions of the neighbourhood in question. Rosemary Gardens was constructed between 1972 and 1974, in the wake of the South African Group Areas Act (1950), legislation that separated 'White', 'Black', 'Coloured' and 'Indian' people residentially. People who owned land in areas deemed by the state to be legally reserved for race groups other than the landowner, were forced to sell their property, usually for an amount far less than it was worth, and to relocate to other, often inadequate housing (Adhikari, 2006). In Cape Town, thousands of people were forcibly removed from areas like the cosmopolitan District Six in the inner-city and from places in the suburbs (Western, 1996). These areas were conveniently located in close proximity to transport and employment nodes and became exclusively reserved for 'White' people. Many people were forced to begin new lives on the Cape Flats, the barren, sandy, windswept area in Cape Town that was designated to be inhabited by 'Black', 'Indian' and 'Coloured' people.

'Real' spatial practices in places like Rosemary Gardens are also rooted in the local political-economy of the Western Cape. The 'Coloured' Labour Preference policy created a racialised local employment hierarchy, reserving jobs for 'Coloured' people ahead of 'Black' people and creating cheap labour for local capital in the textile, canning and fishing industries (Goldin, 1987). Race and class were therefore intimately linked during apartheid and remain so today. The areas in which people were allowed to live, the places where they were able to find employment and attend schools produced a set of Real spatial routes, routines and forms of mobility that were forged through the local political-economy and associated legislation.

The manner in which apartheid era legislation catalysed social dislocation and created ruptures in the social fabric of families and communities is still apparent in the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Today, Rosemary Gardens is characterized by poverty and community violence, gangsterism and drug abuse, overcrowded conditions, lack of access to social services, high levels of unemployment and low incomes for those who are able to find employment

(Statistics South Africa, 2011). Demographically, Rosemary Gardens has not changed significantly in the democratic period. According to the 2011 census this neighbourhood is still inhabited by a vast majority of 95% 'Coloured' people and less than 1% 'White' people. 35% of adults have only primary schooling and less than a quarter of a percentile of residents have attended tertiary education institutions. 59% of the households in this neighbourhood live on a total of less than R3200 income per month.

**Table 4.** Key results for 2011 Census Suburb Rosemary Gardens

|                        |        |
|------------------------|--------|
| Population             | 32 598 |
| Households             | 6 504  |
| Average Household Size | 5.01   |

- The population is predominantly 'Coloured' (95%).
- 19% of those aged 20 years and older have completed Grade 12 or higher.
- 58% of the labour force (aged 15 to 64) is employed.
- 59% of households have a monthly income of R3 200 or less.
- 82% of households live in formal dwellings.
- 91% of households have access to piped water in their dwelling or inside their yard.
- 83% of households have access to a flush toilet connected to the public sewer system.
- 94% of households have their refuse removed at least once a week.
- 99% of households use electricity for lighting in their dwelling.

Source: Stats SA Census 2011

These statistics do not represent the whole or only picture of this neighbourhood, given that many positive social interactions occur and people find innovative, creative and unique ways in which to live their daily lives. However, Real spatial forces cannot be excluded from analysis, as they have a substantial effect on learning at RGHS.

### 'Imagine all the Rosemary Gardens people': Imagined space and learning at RGHS

Real spatial practices that impact on RGHS in the present, such as historically forged residential segregation, overlap with forms of Imagined space. One example of this intersection is the ways in which physical places or neighbourhoods that were constructed for 'Coloured' people under the Group Areas Act (1950) are inscribed with racialised discourses. Young people from areas like Rosemary Gardens, and the schools which they attend, are imagined to be associated with a wide range of stereotypes and prejudices in the Cape Town urban imaginary of the middle and upper classes, as well as in the media. These stereotypes are related to a lack of learning, as well as forms of immorality, criminality, drug use, school dropout and illicit sexual activity. Depictions of 'Colouredness' have been tainted further by the rise of gangs or 'brotherhoods' after forced removals (Pinnock, 1984; Scharf, 1986). Through these brotherhoods some young 'Coloured' men found ways of recreating social cohesion following the state's rupturing of communities like District Six. However, 'Coloured' youth involved in organised armed violence remain a small minority of the total population. Regular depictions, in the media and the general social imaginary, of working-class 'Coloured' youth as 'gangsters', may have a damaging effect on young people at schools like RGHS (Samara, 2011). These portrayals are likely to affect these young people's self-perceptions, as well as what they believe is possible for people like themselves.

The symbolism of young 'Coloured' people as linked to criminality, substance abuse and dubious morality, is exacerbated by new divisions that essentially



render Cape Town two cities: a global one that attempts to lure foreign direct investment and one characterized by urban ghettos of underdevelopment (Samara, 2011). Cape Town is the classic example of a 'Global City' that has created insulated commercial nodes and exclusive residential areas in order to lure international capital and generate economic growth of a particular kind (McDonald, 2008; Miraftab, 2007). This process has been supported by the creation of City Improvement Districts (CIDS), demarcated zones in which taxpayers contribute additional funds in order to gain access to higher quality services, including security. Cheap labour is readily available to aid in these endeavours, in the form of people still living in areas formerly designated for those people that were classified as 'Black', 'Coloured' or 'Indian'. However, the social problems that are the result of these inequalities past and present are perceived as a direct threat to the credibility and allure of the 'first city'. This results in youth of colour being constructed as a problem that needs to be solved; their situation is not interpreted as a consequence of disparities (Samara, 2011). Real spatial divisions enforced through apartheid legislation and subsequent processes that perpetuate inequality have therefore led to Rosemary Gardens being powerfully Imagined as associated with criminality and danger, as well as young people who perform undesirable behaviours and learn very little.

Township schools like RGHS are therefore conceived as dysfunctional spaces associated with racialised discourses of 'Blackness' and 'Colouredness', in the media and in the imaginary of the middle and upper classes of Cape Town (Fataar, 2007). In other countries schools for marginalised youth have been described as 'prisons' and 'warehouses' (see for example Dillabough & Kennelly, 2010; Giroux, 2009). South African township schools are perceived in similar, derogatory terms. The forms of Imagined space that are associated with this school are inseparable from the Real spatial relations that continue to constitute and infiltrate neighbourhoods that were created by the apartheid state.

### 'Learning to live': schooling and Lived space

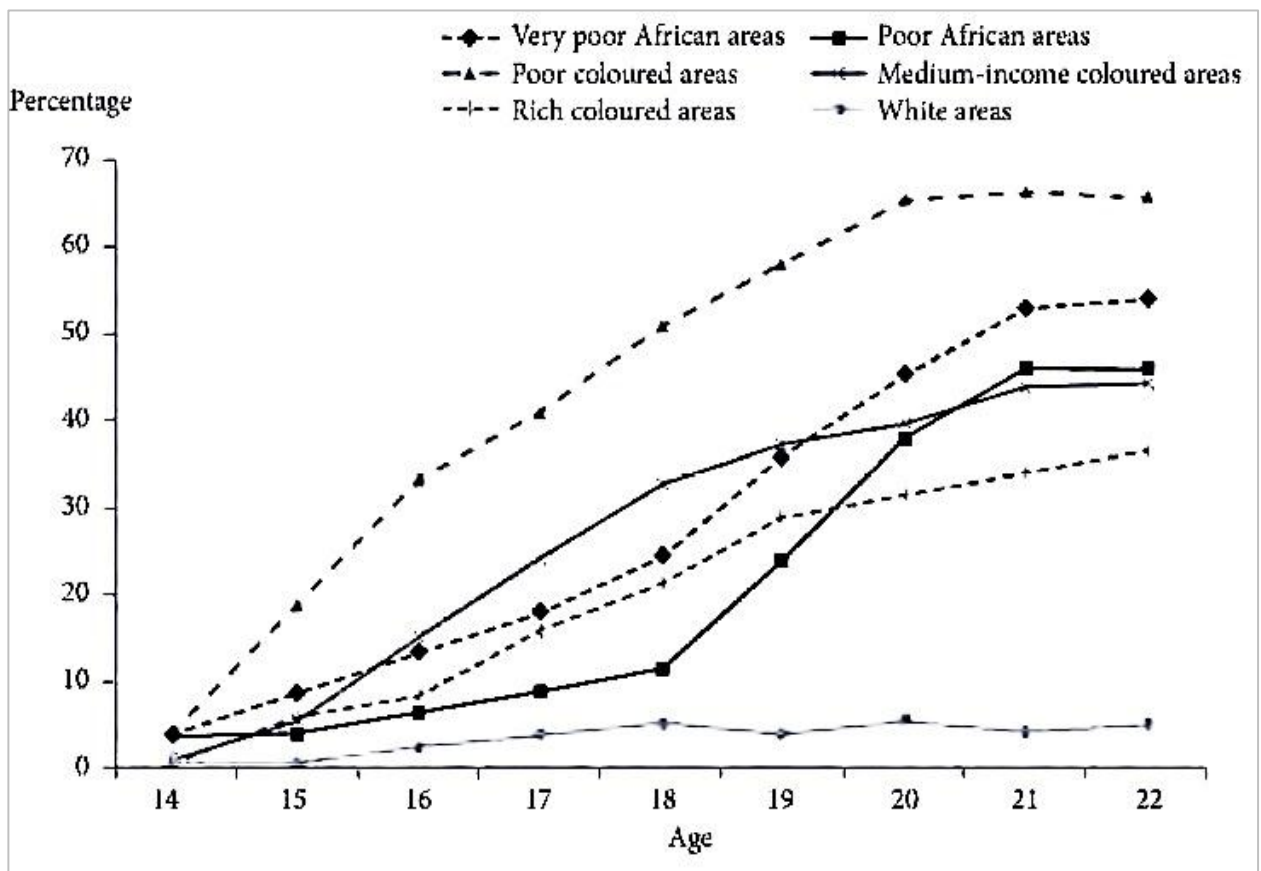
Despite these structural challenges, young people are not passive in relation to the school place, as they actively construct school experiences from the interstices of Real and Imagined space. In international research, studies on marginalized youth explore how Lived space emerges through forms of resistance to schooling. These forms of resistance are interpreted as intentional responses to socio-historical contexts and not simply as 'deviance' or 'delinquency' (Blackman, 2005; Dillabough & Kennelly, 2010; Dimitriadis, 2009; Shildrick & MacDonald, 2006; MacLeod, 1995). Oppositional identities and resistance demonstrate how Lived space emerges through the intersection of culture, social structure and individual biographies, understood as the way in which individuals construct careers out of collective experiences (Cohen & Ainley, 2000; Fataar, 2010).

For example, in the classic study *Learning to Labour: why working class kids get working class jobs*, Paul Willis (1977) illuminated how working-class, British, male youth exert some degree of agency through their schooling. This is achieved by constructing 'opposition identities or cultures', and in so doing rejecting education and educational achievement ideology. These working-class British 'lads' actively produced a 'counter-school' culture based on resisting the authority of their teachers and making fun of middle-class men and their 'book-learning'. Although Willis (1977) does not formally conduct a spatial analysis, his study demonstrates how these youth constructed their identities through denigrating, in the terms that I am using, 'Real' school spatial practices, such as being quiet in class and reading books. The 'lads' simultaneously associated the Imagined space of the school as more suitable for 'soft, middle-class men' and their book learning. The identities of the 'lads' were, alternatively, produced through gay bashing and violence towards 'Blacks', through talk of sexual virility, drinking and having a 'laff' (laugh) (Willis, 1977). Willis' (1977) 'lads' perceived the work that takes place in academic places to be 'less manly' in nature, in comparison to the kinds of physical labour that often comprise the employment activities of working-class men. The 'lads' instead created Lived space through favouring places like the shop floor, where forms of manual labour reproduced 'authentic' class and gender specific practices and identities, as these were imagined by the 'lads'.

Willis (1977) argues powerfully that these boys used aspects of the larger culture in their own praxis and he perceives this as a form of preparation for adult life. Their low educational aspirations, lack of engagement with the school and rejection of the ideology of achievement, were partly based on their socio-economic position and class-based subordination. This oppositional identity therefore functioned as a kind of 'defence-mechanism', in a system where the odds were heavily weighted against these young men's future academic success. Simultaneously, these 'lads' rejection of formal education ultimately resulted in perpetuating the class-based structure of their society. Identities that exhibit elements of Lived space, forged in opposition to mainstream culture, may eventually be self-defeating, as young people often unconsciously reproduce societal power dynamics. Although these young men demonstrated a form of Lived space through rejecting the school, the school's inability to engage with their class-culture backgrounds resulted in suppressed dialogue, a lack of learning and the reproduction of societal inequalities.

A form of Lived space for working-class youth, in relation to the RGHS, may therefore consist of rejecting the school and its ideologies, however the consequences of this course of action may ultimately be self-defeating. Bray et al (2010) found that 'Coloured' youth were far more likely to discontinue their schooling than 'Black' African youth, a finding that quantitative research supports (Bray et al, 2010). Using data from the representative Cape Area Panel Study, Bray et al (2010) show that whereas approximately 10% of learners at schools in poor, former 'Black' African areas had left school by age 17, in excess of 40% of learners of the same age, in former 'Coloured' areas, no longer attend school.

**Figure 1.** Premature departure from school by age and neighbourhood type in Cape Town.



Source: Bray et al, 2010.

Bray et al (2010) interpret the high rates of 'Coloured' youth discontinuing their schooling as caused by these young people not believing in the notion of the new South African 'rainbow nation' and experiencing feelings of alienation in the new democratic dispensation. On the other hand, many 'Black' African youth continue to believe that education offers opportunities for improved social and economic status and therefore persevere with their schooling. In the qualitative component of Bray et al's (2010) study, 'Black' youth in Masiphumelele perceived education as the route out of poverty, whereas young 'Coloured' people in Riverside saw it as one route out of poverty for a small minority (Bray et al, 2010). 'Black' Capetonian youth therefore invest in the widely accepted ideological position that if you go to school and work hard, you will be rewarded with upward social

mobility, whereas, in general, 'Coloured' youth are not convinced by this rhetoric.

Fine (1991) theorises that school discontinuation is a consequence of the numerous ways that school practices, policies and ideologies function to push young people out of school and effectively silence marginalised young people. Silencing occurs through classroom-based practices of quelling dissenting opinions, rewarding conformity, repressing certain forms of participation and the teacher ultimately providing the 'correct' answer that learners need to remember and then recite when they are evaluated (Fine, 1991). Silencing "signifies a terror of words, a fear of talk" (Fine, 1991: 32). This description does not appear to invoke an empowering image of Lived space, created through oppositional identities and rejecting the school. Young people's decisions and practices, such as discontinuing their schooling, therefore need to be carefully analysed to assess whether these actions constitute empowering forms of Lived space. Although oppositional identities and forms of resistance may initially appear to comprise forms of agency, they may ultimately function to perpetuate inequalities (De Lannoy, 2008).

A study that explores Lived space, authority and 'oppositional' school identities, using the analytical lenses of both race and gender, is Mac an Ghaill's (1988) research on the "Black sisters". This study illustrates how it is possible for youth to maintain high educational aspirations and persist with schooling, but, simultaneously, to disengage from education in its institutionalised form. The 'Black sisters' were a group of Asian and Afro-Caribbean girls in the United Kingdom (UK), young women who produced a specific mode of 'resistance within accommodation'. These girls displayed a pro-education but anti-school stance: they saw the value of education in terms of the potential it held for their advancement in society, but rejected education in its institutionalised form due to their experiences of racist schools (Mac an Ghaill, 1988). These young women created Lived space and resisted 'the school' through a lack of punctuality, in terms of attendance and homework completion and by speaking in their mother-tongue language while at school. Concurrently, the 'Black sisters' strived to achieve at school in order to subvert racist societal stereotypes of 'Black' girls being associated with intellectual inferiority (Mac an Ghaill, 1988). These youth

displayed high educational aspirations, but disengaged from the school, in so doing utilising Lived space to resist the school's institutional culture. They therefore found ways of negotiating Imagined space, constructed through race and language and Real space, which they subverted through a lack of punctuality and attendance practices, in order to produce forms of Lived space.

Analysing how dialogic learning takes place at RGHS therefore requires conceptualising this place as a set of intersecting Real, Imagined and Lived socio-spatial relations that coalesce in a particular moment to inhibit or enhance dialogic learning interactions at this school. This entails incorporating the Real, historical forces that have subjugated groups of people who live in Rosemary Gardens and the social problems that have resulted from these historical events. The school and its practices are also shaped by Imagined forces that construct RGHS as a particular kind of place associated with 'Coloured' youth, ideological forces that generally evoke connotations of criminality, substance abuse, teenage pregnancy and a lack of learning. Research has shown that Lived space crystalises in schools like RGHS through young people's oppositional identities and resistance to the process of schooling. These practices may ultimately be self-defeating in terms of youth not learning to acquire powerful forms of knowledge or obtaining formal education qualifications that may be used for upward social mobility.

### **'Two weddings and a funeral service': The Doodvenootskap as a site of learning**

#### Learning practices enabled by Real office space

The Doodvenootskap (DVS) is a crew of young hip-hop artists from Rosemary Gardens, youth who write lyrics, record tracks of music and attempt to raise consciousness with regard to some of the issues that they consider to comprise social problems in their neighbourhood. The title of this section is a play on the title of the popular movie "Four Weddings and a Funeral". In this context it refers to the committed relationships DVS has with the NGO called the Children's Rights

and Anti-Abuse Group (CRAAG) and with hip-hop culture, as well as the literal translation of the Afrikaans term Doodvenootskap, which means 'funeral service'. To further explain DVS' relationship with CRAAG, three members of the DVS crew are employed by this organisation. As CRAAG employees these youth help conduct research with young people in Rosemary Gardens and advocate for the non-violent treatment of children from this neighbourhood. Through their work for CRAAG these young people also facilitate youth participation in decision-making processes at school and in the community.

DVS is not a 'place' in the same ways that Youth Amplified and RGHS constitute places. Youth Amplified and RGHS have a definite physical location in which most of the learning-related activities associated with those places occur. These other two places comprise sets of social relations that regularly coalesce in specific geographical locations: the building on Grindal Road, Rosemary Gardens (RGHS) and the radio station on Main Road, Salt River (Youth Amplified). DVS does not have a similar physical node and it can therefore more aptly be thought of as a metaphorical 'place'. However, DVS does conduct a substantial proportion of its work at the community centre in Rosemary Gardens, where CRAAG has provided the group with an office and this is the place in which I predominantly interacted with the group. This community centre is generally known as the 'Global Hope Foundation' building. Global Hope Foundation (GHF) is an international NGO that operates in Rosemary Gardens; its premises were built in 1982 through a partnership between the United Reformed Church from Germany and GHF. This place was originally used exclusively as a crèche for children from the area. Other NGOs besides GHF now rent offices in the building and this place functions to serve a diverse range of needs for the people of Rosemary Gardens.

As mentioned, CRAAG has employed three DVS members, providing them with an office, a physical place that the entire group utilises. The history of NGOs having a physical presence in the neighbourhood of Rosemary Gardens, therefore aids people and groups who were oppressed by apartheid, such as the young people of the Doodvenootskap. NGOs continue to conduct community development work in this and other neighbourhoods, in the democratic period, impacting on the Real space of these areas, through for example, building



community centres that provide services for residents. These physical places enable young people like the Doodvenootskap to participate in specific kinds of learning practices and engage in a set of dialogues with NGOs that work in the building and neighbourhood.

'Can we Rap? Yes we can!' Imagined and Lived space for the Doodvenootskap

The Imagined or discursive frameworks within which CRAAG and other NGOs in the Global Hope Foundation building work, provide a rich set of conceptual resources for dialogic learning between these NGOs, particularly CRAAG, and the Doodvenootskap. CRAAG staff disseminate discourses of children's rights and the eradication of child-abuse and neglect, in their general speech and in documents produced by the organisation, language that is related to the history of this NGO. To elaborate, a department in a Cape Town tertiary education institution formed CRAAG in 1989, with the intention of using the NGO to conduct training and provide education with regard to the prevention of child abuse. CRAAG was initially established as a research programme and later became part of a research unit at the university in question.

CRAAG has therefore been positioned within the field of public health, meaning that a pervasive human rights discourse punctuates the speech of CRAAG employees. CRAAG's discourse is couched in the language of "empowerment", "human rights" and "resilience", something which can be deduced from its acronym CRAAG- Children's Rights and Anti-Abuse Group. The Doodvenootskap is therefore exposed to this discourse and a range of new concepts through their associations with CRAAG.

Partnerships between civil society organisations, such as DVS and CRAAG, may therefore generate forms of Lived space through enabling rich dialogical learning places that combine liberal, rights-based discourses with forms of collective mobilization. This phenomenon has been highlighted more generally as an effective form of political engagement in post-colonial contexts like South Africa (Robbins, 2008). While the existence of a relatively 'big' state has provided grants and constitutionalised social rights to citizens, access to these rights often



requires pressure, advocacy and grassroots mobilisation, forcing the state to deliver on these legislated promises (Robbins, 2008). In post-apartheid South Africa some of the most effective forms of political mobilisation have therefore been catalysed by partnerships between NGOs, other civil society organisations and social movements, as these groups adopt pragmatic approaches to accessing state and donor funding, often through creating rich forms of dialogue in the public sector (Robbins, 2008)<sup>5</sup>. What Robbins (2008) calls the 'popular classes' are therefore not passive in relation to government discourses and guarantees, but work actively within multiple frameworks and dialogics, in their on-going, everyday engagements with the state, NGOs and other powerful individuals and groups. For DVS this course of action/partnership means potentially being exposed to concepts and dialogues that are educational and which may shape its members' thinking in profound ways.

The Imagined and Lived spaces within which the DVS crew learn are also produced by their affiliation to global and local hip-hop culture. Hip-hop as a sub-culture and a set of practices began in the Bronx in the early 1970s, consisting of rapping, breakdancing or b-boying, graffiti art and DJing (Chang, 2005; 2006). 'Conscious' hip-hop, a subculture of hip-hop, started in the United States in the 1980s and 90s and is associated with American artists such as Afrika Bambaata, KRS-one and Chuck D. Conscious hip-hop provides youth with the space to dialogue with mainstream popular culture and gangsta rap, thus learning in a critical manner (Haupt, 2008). Conscious hip-hop prioritises what is known as the fifth element of hip-hop, namely knowledge, particularly 'knowledge of self'. This is believed to be generated through intensive introspection, a necessary learning process, according to emcees, before meaningful hip-hop art can be generated for political and social ends (Haupt, 2008).

Hip-hop has provided Cape Town youth with a form of public space in which to engage with issues of common concern and enhance the critical and creative

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<sup>5</sup> The Treatment Action Campaign forcing the state to provide anti-retrovirals for HIV positive people and Abahlali baseMjondolo- the shack dwellers anti eviction campaign for people in informal settlements, are examples of political alliances between civil society organisations and local people in post-apartheid South Africa.

learning skills, which they often do not acquire in the mainstream education system (Haupt, 2008). Towards the end of apartheid, Cape Town based conscious hip-hop groups like Prophets of da City and Black Noise used this cultural form to create a space for youth to express their resistance to the apartheid regime and question apartheid era categories (Haupt, 2008). These groups utilised forms of Black Consciousness in their tracks, attempting to stimulate critical thinking with regard to forms of identity. Consider the following lyrics from 'Black thing' by the group Prophets Of da City:

*The term 'Coloured' is a desperate case  
Of how the devil divided us by calling us a separate race  
They called me 'Coloured', said my blood isn't pure, but G  
I'm not yakking my insecurity  
So I respond to this and ventilate my mental state with black consciousness  
.....  
And I believe in each one teach one reach one from the heart  
Cause that's where beats are from  
But racism's a trap and the nation seems to lack knowledge of self.  
But it means what it seems  
We're attracting anything but a black thing  
(Quoted in Haupt, 2008:146)*

And from Black Noise:

*Mandela can't set the 'Coloured' man free, cause the 'Coloured' man don't know  
who the hell he wanna be.  
(Quoted in Battersby, 2003: 124)*

Prophets of da City therefore invoked forms of Black Consciousness through the creative medium of hip-hop, which generated powerful dialogic learning opportunities for Cape Town youth during apartheid. Apartheid functioned as an

extreme form of restricting people classified as 'Black', 'Coloured' or 'Indian' from accessing public spaces and quality education, with conscious hip-hop groups like Prophets of da City resisting this process through forms of Black Consciousness (Haupt, 2008). However, the lyrics of groups like Prophets of da City may also produce an "Afrocentric black nationalist illusion" (Haupt, 2001: 180), hinting that all 'Black' people were united in South Africa prior to colonialism and that they are united in the present. This militates against some of the complexities involved in the history of Cape Town and South Africa and the rich cultural mixtures that have evolved in these contexts. The Black Noise lyric indicates that other groups may take a more deconstructionist and less essentialistic approach to engaging with identity formation, through hip-hop. However, both groups demonstrate that this medium can be used to stimulate the interests and concerns of Cape Town youth.

DVS form part of this rich tradition of learning through dialogue as it manifests in conscious hip-hop in Cape Town, although their politics is not aligned with Black Consciousness, as will become clear in chapter six. In the post-apartheid era hip-hop continues to provide the Imagined space for South African youth to engage in forms of dialogic learning. Hip-hop has therefore provided multiple generations of South African, and more specifically Cape Town youth, with a public space in which to resist oppressive political regimes, gain access to the public sphere and 'self-service' some of their developmental learning needs.

NGOs that have worked in local Cape Town communities since the anti-apartheid struggle therefore create forms of Real space, like community centres, sites that enable alternative places for learning amongst local youth. Many of these NGOs continue to support people in low-income neighbourhoods, like Rosemary Gardens, in the democratic era. These Real spatial learning practices are combined with discursive frameworks, such as a human rights discourse, within which NGOs in Rosemary Gardens continue to operate and which hold potential for forms of dialogic learning. Dialogue and learning are also facilitated, for DVS, through their ties to conscious hip-hop, a form of expression that enabled youth classified as 'Black' or 'Coloured' to reclaim public space and question repressive categories during the apartheid struggle. Conscious hip-hop continues to function

in opposition to forms of oppression, for some marginalised youth, in the post-apartheid period.

### **'Amplifying the youth on air': Youth Amplified as a learning place**

#### **'Getting real on radio': Real space and Youth Amplified**

Unlike RGHS and the Doodvenootskap, Youth Amplified's central activities took place outside of Rosemary Gardens, at the community radio station. The studio is a big warehouse and is not particularly glamorous. The radio station shaped dialogic learning through some of the Real spatial relations associated with this place. As a brief history to this institution, this radio station became a broadcasting community radio station shortly after the democratic political transition. The radio station born out of the founder's student project that was a component of an adult education course at a tertiary education institution. The founder constructed a 'talking newspaper' through which he produced and distributed cassette tapes comprising of the speeches of banned activists, politically charged music and revolutionary poetry, in Cape Town in the early 1980s, as the United Democratic Front's defiance campaigns gained momentum (Bosch, 2006). The community radio station has subsequently established strong links to the University of the Western Cape's (UWC) journalism department. These founding influences that occurred during the apartheid struggle and current links to a university that contains a history of political activism, are apparent in the practices that take place at the radio station. Such practices manifest in radio content, policy and the kind of personnel who are employed by, and volunteer at, the station.

#### **Youth Amplified, critical pedagogy and Imagined space**

My own role in organizing this show shaped the kind of Imagined space that emerged at Youth Amplified. The practices that I introduced, such as insisting that the group engage with materials and that they generate questions prior to the show, had a substantial influence on the resulting place and associated forms of

learning. My idea was that the radio show would broadly constitute a form of critical pedagogy. Critical pedagogy is an orientation to teaching and learning that follows Paulo Freire's (1970) philosophy that states that in order for oppressed peoples to liberate themselves, they must first recognize the causes of their oppression. According to Freire (1970), becoming aware of the conditions of one's oppression conscientises oppressed peoples and, in turn, catalyses transformative actions in order for them to change oppressive structural conditions. Critical pedagogy is not a method, rather it opens a space for students to act and assert themselves as agents, question their assumptions, develop an appreciation for history and a temperance for authority and critically interrogate the idea that education is a value-neutral enterprise (Giroux, 2007). It assumes that schooling is a cultural and historical process that reproduces the structure of society, such that the poor remain poor (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008). My idea for the show was therefore to experiment with a form of critical pedagogy and observe how young people from Rosemary Gardens engaged with ideas based on this approach, in the presence of a diverse range of peers.

I planned for this critical pedagogic youth radio show to revolve around young people engaging with materials, such as documentary films, newspaper articles, guests and music, such that these materials would form the basis for critical discussions. Youth engaging with materials would therefore be used to explore the themes of 'education in South Africa' and other issues chosen by youth. Without these materials, discussions on schooling and education could easily have degenerated into individual musings about the harsh environments in which youth socialisation takes place, with youth employing cliqued descriptions of their schools, homes and communities.

During the 18 months of the programme we watched a number of documentaries, including *Testing Hope*, *Afrikaaps* and *Waiting for Superman*. *Testing Hope* is a story about township learners toiling in order to pass matric. *Afrikaaps* is a film that explores the possibilities of using a local, informal version of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction in Cape Town schools. *Waiting for Superman* explores inequality in the American educational context. We also read newspaper articles and an excerpt from '*I write what I like*' by Black Consciousness activist Steve

Biko. We interviewed guests live on air, such as DVS and the junior mayor of Cape Town. Sometimes I made suggestions in terms of materials that I thought would stimulate vibrant discussion and on other occasions the young people suggested ideas for materials for the show. After watching, reading or listening to these different media, participants would write down 5-10 questions to be used in the discussion.

Other research has highlighted how the medium of radio production amongst youth and adults can generate democratic, participatory relationships between the different people that are involved and stimulate forms of learning. Chavez & Soep (2005) describe youth radio as a pedagogy of collegiality, characterised by joint framing, youth led inquiry, mediated interventions and distributed accountability. The relationships between adults and young people are therefore defined by collegiality, in this context, as each group relies on the other in order to produce a high-quality product that is consumed by an audience (Chavez & Soep, 2005). These practices mean that a culture of cooperation and not competition may well underpin forms of learning in this context.

#### 'Keeping up standards': school culture impacting on learning in new places

The place 'Youth Amplified' was also forged through the mixture of participating schools that students at the show represented. These schools have a range of different institutional cultures, socialisation practices, norms and values. As a means of describing these different schools, learners were initially recruited for the youth radio show from RGHS, where I was conducting youth leadership sessions at the time. Students from Lukhanyo High School were also invited. This school, a partner of my former employer, the Extra-Mural Education Project (EMEP), was almost exclusively attended by 'Black' African, Xhosa speaking students. During the time in which I was approaching schools, I met with the director of SAILI, an organization that, like EMEP, was part of a consortium of organisations funded by the Royal Netherlands Embassy. The director of SAILI agreed to pay for the transportation costs of Cape Institute of Excellence (CIE) learners, students that participated in the SAILI programme, to and from the radio

station. The Western Cape Education Department had recently established the CIE to enhance the academic development of gifted learners reared in the townships. This group of students had attained good academic results, particularly in mathematics and science and had been awarded SAILI scholarships in order to attend and reside at the CIE, outside of their township homes. The CIE is epitomized by the attitudes of the new South African state that aspires to become a competitive BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) nation within the global economy. The students study Mandarin as part of their curriculum and one of the Youth Amplified learners visited China with the school in 2012.

A fourth school was invited into the emerging space, as the radio station did not want the show to become stigmatized as solely consisting of 'marginalised youth'. A former model C school<sup>6</sup> that is the alma mater of the young woman who was providing me with technical support at the community radio station was decided upon. This school, Barry Hertzog High School (BHHS), agreed to select learners to participate in the show. Former model C schools in South Africa are generally associated with pedagogies and discourses of 'Whiteness' that originated in the colonial and apartheid eras. An example of these 'discourses of Whiteness' is the notion of 'standards' that are regularly described as needing to be upheld at former model C schools (Dolby, 2002; Soudien, 2012). This discourse is propagated by a new multi-racial class coalition that has formed at former model C schools in the democratic period (Soudien, 2012). This informal 'coalition' is led by the old 'White' middle-class, which has morphed into a new multi-racial middle-class, disseminating notions of 'good schooling, quality and the maintenance of standards' (Soudien, 2012). This discourse of 'standards needing

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<sup>6</sup> In the final years of the apartheid era, parents at 'White' government schools were given the option to convert their governance structure to a semi-private form called *Model C*, and many of these schools changed their admissions policies to accept children of other races. These schools could also establish school fee policies (Sayed, 1999). Following the transition to democracy, the legal form of "Model C" was abolished, however, the term continues to be used in public discourse to describe government schools formerly reserved for 'White' children.

to be kept' is often used by middle-class parents to set school fee policies that essentially ensure the exclusion of other groups. Middle-class parents agree amongst themselves that the preservation of the character and traditions of the 'good school' are essential to maintaining 'quality education and high standards' (Soudien, 2012).

Dolby (2002) illustrated how sport, specifically rugby, and dress standards, function to reproduce these discourses of 'Whiteness', even though the school at which she conducted her study was comprised of a majority of 'Black' students. The 'image' of the school that Dolby (2002) researched and how it was perceived by others, was very important to teachers, as learning revolved around reinforcing a philosophy of control, based on appearance, forms of behaviour and discipline. Unlike former 'non-white' schools, where school uniform policies are unevenly enforced, wearing school uniform 'properly' functioned in this context as a demonstration of respectability and 'standards being upheld' (Dolby, 2002). Dolby (2002) interpreted this discursive notion of 'standards' as linked to representations of 'Whiteness' and Europe, as the school sought to protect itself from being conflated with the 'barbaric' African majority and their apparently 'unruly way of dressing'. This school's senior management perceived it to be located within a network of Durban, South African and Commonwealth schools, with their heritage in the British empire, distinct from the African majority.

The BHHS learners attended a former model C school similar to the one described by Dolby (2001, 2002), which impacted on their interactions with students from other, less well-resourced schools. The Cape Institute for Excellence also displays elements of elitism, although this institution was established in the democratic era, linked to the aspirations of the new South African state. These two schools socialise their students with institutional practices and discourses that other research has shown produces tension, when these learners interact with youth who attend schools in the townships. Studies show that youth who utilize these discourses of 'Whiteness' and display traits associated with former model C schools, are ostracized by their township peers (Bray et al, 2010; Ramphele, 2003; Soudien, 2007). Young people who speak English in public places, attend schools outside of the townships and



incorporate academic identities through, for example, reading and carrying books, are teased for 'playing White' by their peers (Ramphele, 2003). Jealousy and resentment that results from perceived attempts at upward social mobility, may lead to youth who attend township schools 'policing' racial boundaries and shaming individuals who attend elite schools.

Actions linked to jealousy and resentment may be due to young people who remain in the townships for their schooling becoming frustrated, as they are often trapped in a limited physical and dialogical repertoire, cut off from the city's public life and learning opportunities which lie beyond the township's perimeter. These township youth often understand their immediate environments, but struggle to learn beyond these places or to develop identities that usefully service them outside of these under-resourced areas (Soudien, 2007). Soudien (2007) states that the lives of youth that attend township schools are invariably dominated by everyday survival and meeting their own immediate needs. For most of these young people "dependence is their key reproductive agency" and their contribution to society is often limited to their survival within it (Soudien, 2007: 103). Research has therefore demonstrated that interactions between learners from schools that are similar to RGHS and those from more elite schools, may lead to conflict and hostile exchanges and, in turn, inhibit dialogic learning between young people who attend these different kinds of schools.

International research also shows that the schools which learners attend and the neighbourhoods in which they reside, expose young people to a set of place-related discourses, values and ideologies (Ball, Maguire & Macrae, 2000). Globalisation has generally resulted in more well off youth's practices being continually disembedded from local environments and locations (Ball et al, 2000). By contrast, many working-class youth's subcultural identities and free-time activities remain linked to street corner socialising and local peer-group networks. Aspects of the school-to-work transition often remain tied to local neighbourhood associations for marginalised young people (Shildrick & McDonald, 2006). In the global era, dialogues amongst young people are therefore bound up in networks and forms of mobility that either open up opportunities for learning and connect them to valuable networks, or blockade them from accessing these forms of

knowledge and support. These experiences have ramifications for young people's entry into new learning places, such as Youth Amplified. When youth who have access to valuable networks and discourses and demonstrate upwardly mobile aspirations interact with young people who are not able to use these social relations and discourses, conflict may ensue.

As a learning place, Youth Amplified is conceptualised as produced through the Real spatial practices associated with the history of the community radio station and the fact that the show was broadcast live on air, meaning that it had consequences for the young people. Imagined space, forged through the language and discourses used at Youth Amplified, was partly produced by the critical pedagogy tradition, linked to notions of conscientisation and eradicating oppression, as well as the diverse mixture of elite and township schools which participating learners represented. Research has shown that the genre of 'youth radio' and media production more generally (see for example Chavez & Soep, 2005; Goodman, 2003; Mahiri, 2003), promotes Lived space through notions of participation, child-centered discourses and adult-youth collaboration. However, the interaction of township-schooled youth with learners from well-resourced schools has created tension, in other contexts.

## **Conclusion**

In sum, particular sets of Real, Imagined and Lived social relations coalesce to produce the three places in this study, with implications for dialogic learning. Reviewing other research on similar places, such as youth radio production, hip-hop and low-income schooling elsewhere, helps to unpack the key characteristics of these places and the ways in which such places shape young people's learning endeavours. The histories of these places also shape dialogic learning. For RGHS the tumultuous neighbourhood of Rosemary Gardens, constructed during the apartheid era, affects learning in the school place, as students spend the vast majority of their time in this neighbourhood. In terms of Youth Amplified, the different schools students attended shaped their identities in profound ways and molded this new place, as these different schools' values and practices 'travelled

with' learners to the radio station. As Soudien (2007) states, the formal discourse of the school, contained in the approach that the school community adopts, and to which it is committed for its educational work, is far weaker and less institutionalised at former 'Black' and working-class 'Coloured' schools. In the case of RGHS, this weak formal discourse may render the school vulnerable to 'infiltration' from Real spatial forces of the Rosemary Gardens community. At Youth Amplified RGHS learners' weak formal school discourse may result in the institutional culture of certain other schools eclipsing the school culture imbibed by RGHS learners. Finally, in all three of these places we observe how imagined constructions of race infuse learning practices. At RGHS this takes the form of the apartheid era construction of a racially segregated 'Coloured' school and neighbourhood. DVS demonstrates conscious hip-hop endeavours associated with 'Black' and 'Coloured' youth and ties to NGOs whose work has historically been concentrated in 'Black' and 'Coloured' communities that were oppressed by apartheid. Youth Amplified takes place at a radio station that was established to resist racial injustice and is made up of students from different participating schools, with a range of associated racialised histories.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **'PLUMBING THE POINTS OF ARTICULATION': METHODOLOGY**

*In short, our predilection is for theory that neither is an all-embracing meta-narrative nor is microcosmically, myopically local, but tacks on the awkward scale between the two, seeking to explain phenomena with reference both to their larger determinations and their contingent, proximate conditions- by plumbing the complex, often counter-intuitive points of articulation among them.*

Jean Comaroff & John Comaroff, 2012: 48

*We need a complex humanism, a good deal of interpretation underpinned by theories that take power seriously and a critical reflexivity that is embodied and grounded in forms of practice*

Parker, 1999: 34

## **Introduction**

In this research project I mainly used an interpretive approach, examining how young people make meaning of their social worlds, in order to understand how dialogic learning operated amongst youth from Rosemary Gardens, in a range of different places. However, my focus on studying learning through dialogue in the different places through which youth moved, needed me also to unpack, conceptually, what 'dialogic learning' and 'place' consisted of and to spend sufficient time in each place, collecting empirical 'evidence' on which to build the larger argument. Thus, the research project also included conceptual and empirical dimensions that evolved in iterative ways, as initial interpretations were formulated and then reworked, whilst data was simultaneously collected,

analysed and reinterpreted in relation to the theories that I was starting to discover and use. The larger research project was therefore very much about how I negotiated the gaps between the macro and the micro, the abstract and the concrete, the conceptual and the interpretive, how to work with the empirical, and between theory and practice, as I set about “plumbing the complex counter-intuitive points of articulation among them” (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2012: 49).

In the chapter below I explain how I came to make particular methodological decisions for the project, how I identified my main ethnographic site of study and its many subsets and how I collected my data. I then describe the techniques and conventions that I used and followed in making sense of and analysing the rich information, as insights were generating and transformative viewpoints emerged from the project.

The chapter begins with an engagement with the nature of an interpretive, ethnographic study, as well as its value for the project at both the practical and conceptual levels. It then shifts back to describing the research process that unfolded, and the choices that were made in its design.

### **An interpretive, ethnographic study**

I generally followed an interpretive methodological approach, which assumes that all human action is meaningful and that it needs to be understood in relation to the contexts in which social practices and social interactions occur (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012; Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999; Usher, 1996). My study focuses, particularly, on the linguistic practices and dialogic interactions of young people from one low-income neighbourhood, in Cape Town. Through a careful analysis of these young people’s utterances and words, in the places in which these dialogues occur, I have interpreted how these youth view the world around them and their place therein. The ways in which young people make meaning of their social worlds has profound relevance for their learning practices. For example, young people in Rosemary Gardens make meaning of the language that they use in relation

to comparisons of language spoken by other people. In conversation with educators and peers from more affluent neighbourhoods these youth come to certain realisations about the language that they speak at home and in the neighbourhood in which they live. I have therefore used an interpretive paradigm to explore the ways in which young people in Rosemary Gardens use language to make meaning of their own and others perspectives, as they engage in dialogues in formal and informal educational places.

My study falls within an interpretive tradition of critical ethnographic educational research that includes studies such as Willis (1977), Heath (1983), Fine (1991), Weis (1990), Dimitriadis (2009) and MacLeod (1995). These pieces of research have combined deep descriptive accounts of young people, with sharp political and ideological critiques of the systems of power within which youth are situated (Dimitriadis, 2009). Such research is broadly interpretive in its orientation, looking at how young people make sense of the world around them, with a critical aspect to the research, in that it is concerned with issues of power and inequality (Carspecken, 1996). Part of the reason for my choice of critical ethnography, as a methodological approach, lay in the fact that critical ethnographers, like myself, are committed to unveiling forms of systemic social inequality. It is this value orientation, rather than a finite set of practices that primarily define this research method (Carspecken, 2001). Inequalities that affect Rosemary Gardens youth were illuminated through studying that ways in which young people's linguistic capitals were valued in different places, in a form of multi-site ethnography.

### **Multi-site ethnography**

My research question, asking how young people learn through dialogue in different places, was suited to the ethnographic method, as this approach:

*focuses on a particular population, place and time, with the deliberate goal of describing it to others (Sanjek, 2002: 193)*

However, more than merely focusing on and describing a particular population, namely Rosemary Gardens youth, I was specifically attempting to capture how this group engaged in learning practices. I needed to be cognisant of the fact that, as previously stated, the contemporary global context has resulted in time, space and culture becoming highly fragmented, meaning that one cannot merely observe people in 'natural settings' and expect to understand the totality of their worlds. In this context it is necessary, rather, to document how people move through a range of settings and how these places relate to one another, in order to piece together a more complex and holistic understanding of people's lives.

I therefore chose to focus on, and in one case, develop, three different sites inhabited by young people from the same neighbourhood, exploring how they made meaning of language and learnt, dialogically. These places were Rosemary Gardens High School, a group of young hip-hop artists operating mainly within the neighbourhood of Rosemary Gardens, and a youth radio show that took place outside of this neighbourhood, but involved many young people who lived in Rosemary Gardens. As such, the project employed a form of multi-site ethnography.

While traditional ethnography consists of the researcher(s) observing and participating in life within a single-site, with a unitary 'cultural group', I felt that a multi-site ethnography would allow me to make links and connections between different sites and people within Rosemary Gardens (Hannerz, 2003; Marcus, 1995, 1998).

I considered that while single site ethnography normally documented one site, comprehensively, in order to make generalisations regarding broader socio-economic and cultural formations, by contrast a multi-site ethnography would allow people, places, objects, and practices previously thought to be incommensurate, to be juxtaposed and compared. By holding these different places and practices up against one another, I believed that I could illuminate links that told a bigger story about, for example, the lives and learning of the young people of Rosemary Gardens. Furthermore, the choice of a multi-site ethnography would also sanction an explication of pathways, chains and inter-

connected locations where I, as the researcher, was also present. In this way, the relationships between myself- the researcher- and the different sites, formed part of the logic of the ethnographic argument (Marcus, 1995; Dimitriadis & Weis, 2004).

By choosing to juxtapose classrooms, a hip-hop collective, and a youth radio show, my goal was to highlight commonalities as well as dissimilarities between the ways in which young people learn through dialogue in different places. By incorporating disparate sites into a common analytical framework I wanted to bring together research opportunities often thought to be worlds apart (Marcus, 1995).

However, my main challenge, in developing a multi-site ethnography, lay in translating the language, metaphors, discourses, and objectives that existed in the different contexts into a common set of concepts and objects of study that were comparable across the sites. Young people's use of language occurred in all three sites, forming the basis for a point of comparison. The study could therefore also be categorized as a kind of multi-site *linguistic* ethnography.

Linguistic ethnographers explore how social relations relate to language use and how youth use language to express themselves (Mercer, 2010). Such studies also examine how language genres play a key role in educational settings and how broader forces of, for example, culture and government policy impact on young people's use of language (Mercer, 2010). My multi-site linguistic ethnography did not, therefore, primarily entail measuring 'what' and 'how much' has been learnt. Instead, I explored how forms of language that young people bring to formal and informal learning environments were affirmed or subjugated in these contexts, as these youth engaged with the utterances of other people.

The ways in which young people use forms of language, in different places and the manner in which language imbues their utterances with social status, were used as a basis for comparison across the different sites. The Bakhtinian term 'heteroglossia' was particularly useful as a concept in this regard, because of



the diverse and divided nature of the language that the young people from Rosemary Gardens spoke. Their language use was evidence of the rich social history of the city in which they lived, and further revealed the need for a careful excavation of Cape Town's linguistic and social history. 'Heteroglossia' made it possible to grasp the multiple 'tongues', past and present, that informed the language used by youth across Rosemary Gardens, in the three places.

It was clear from the empirical work that the different strands of language used by these young people, and by others with whom they interacted, were mediated by power relations. It was therefore necessary to incorporate Bourdieu's (1991) theory of the 'linguistic market' to the concept of 'heteroglossia', as the multilingual context of Cape Town has resulted in languages being differentially valued. The manner in which other people evaluate the words of young people from Rosemary Gardens, based on the place of these utterances in the linguistic market and hierarchy, was therefore a central component of the analysis.

Developing tools that could be used to compare the three places in this multi-site linguistic ethnography therefore meant adapting theory and concepts from Bakhtin (1981;1986) and Bourdieu (1977; 1991) and exploring what these might mean in relation to youth from Rosemary Gardens. While the theoretical and conceptual frameworks of Bakhtin (1981; 1986) and Bourdieu (1991) were used to develop a social theory of learning, Lefebvre's (1991) three moments of social space were used to illustrate how dialogic learning is socio-spatial in nature. A socio-spatial theory illuminates how this form of learning is shaped by intersecting sets of social relations that are historically contingent. A similar analytic process was therefore necessary to mould Lefebvre's (1991) triad of spatial forms such that they could be applied to my study. South African cities, like Cape Town, have unique spatial histories due to the legacies of colonialism and apartheid. Real and Imagined spatial forces needed to be interpreted in relation to these historical forces and the three chosen 'learning places'.

The concepts of 'dialogic learning' and 'place' were then used to conduct a comparative analysis of the three sites or places. The classroom, radio show, and discussions with and amongst members of a local hip-hop group were treated as a crucial basis to explore the different kinds of dialogic interactions that emerged amongst youth from Rosemary Gardens. Below I outline how I came to discover, choose, and in one case help create, the three different sites of youth dialogue that are compared in the project.

### **Identifying and conceptualising the different sites of the ethnography**

#### **Site 1: Rosemary Gardens High School**

The choice of Rosemary Gardens as the neighbourhood for my study was linked to my employment at the Extra-Mural Education Project (EMEP) at the time when I first started my research project, as well as a number of other factors that made this particular neighbourhood very appropriate as a research site.

Rosemary Gardens was located in reasonably close proximity to where I lived in Cape Town and the learners at Rosemary Gardens High School were from a poor, working class, Afrikaans-speaking community, who mostly struggled with learning in formal schooling places, and thus fitted the formal educational place that I sought to explore.

Importantly, my access to RGHS began with my EMEP links to a primary school in close proximity to the high school, as mentioned in the prologue. EMEP provided a programme of extra-mural activities at this primary school, activities that sought to assist learners in ways that helped their schooling. In relation to this, a woman who volunteered at RGHS, May Hughes, called EMEP wanting to explore the possibility of extending the EMEP programme to Rosemary Gardens High School. Unfortunately EMEP could not service RGHS with its full programme, but a colleague asked me to join him in facilitating youth leadership sessions at the school on Saturday mornings. Our view was that we could aid students at the primary school and make their transition into secondary school more comfortable by creating an orientation programme at RGHS. This led to

the subsequent development of an interesting and synergetic relationship between myself and the principal of RGHS, Mr Williams.

Much later in the process, when I embarked on my PhD research, I approached Mr Williams and asked him if the school governing body would grant me permission to observe classes at the school, as part of my research. Once this permission was granted I was allocated to a senior educator at the school, who connected me to teachers that I then observed, in their classrooms. My healthy professional relationship with Mr Williams also led to him providing transport money for learners at the school, which enabled these young people to attend and participate in the youth radio show, Youth Amplified, which started in the second half of 2011.

May Hughes's involvement at RGHS sheds some light on the changing nature of the RGHS place. As noted in the prologue, Mrs Hughes is an elderly woman in her 70s who had been assisting the school for a number of years. As part of this voluntary work, May documented and planned a four stage School is Power (SIP) Programme, with the first stage completed in 2008 (see appendix A). Phase 1 comprised of upgrading the two school sports fields and supplementing them with a sophisticated irrigation system funded by local and international Rotary Clubs, DG Murray Trust and local government and businesses. The other stages of Mrs Hughes' project focused on different planned programmes to help the learners. In its entirety, the SIP Programme consisted of interventions that sought to lower the very high rates of school discontinuation at RGHS. As a member of the local Rotary club, and concerned citizen attempting to help reduce the 'crime problem' in Cape Town neighbourhoods, May also helped form the Rosemary Gardens Development Trust. This fundraising forum was established in order to develop the school's infrastructure. While deemed a welcomed contribution, on certain occasions the lines between the activities of the Trust, both as a fundraising body and as a structure that provided input into school management issues, became quite

blurred. At one time, teachers became quite resentful and confused about the overall agenda of the SIP programme.

Related to the above processes and activities, I was often invited to functions at the school, including the prize-giving, as well as other events that involved dignitaries from the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) and speeches by the patron of the SIP programme, who is a prominent academic. In these meetings I met a number of local WCED officials and later interviewed some of them about their personal perceptions of the school and the learners. In mentioning the above I highlight my involvement at the school beyond my role as researcher. This will be picked up in a later section where I discuss the development and creation of certain relationships for ethnographic study.

#### Site 2: The Doodvenootskap

Participation in these different forums at RGHS led to the fortuitous introduction and opportunity to research the local hip-hop group, namely the Doodvenootskap. I first encountered the group at a function commemorating the opening of the school gymnasium sponsored by the Virgin Active Group. My first extensive interaction with DVS occurred when May Hughes invited a group of different people to attend a teatime discussion on school dropout, or as I prefer to call, discontinuation, at her home in a nearby middle-class, previously 'White' neighbourhood. The discussion group consisted of myself, the principal, Mr Williams, some local parent representatives who served on the school governing body, a group of visiting students from Vanderbilt University in the USA, who were doing some work for SIP at the high school, as well as members of a Department of Cultural Affairs and Sport (DCAS) programme that takes place at the school. This programme involves local young people, who are paid a stipend to coach and facilitate a range of sporting and cultural activities at the school. The leader of this DCAS group, Clause, had also invited Dylan Aprils of CRAAG to attend the meeting, along with three members (Rico, Hoppie and Fabio) of a local hip-hop youth group, the Doodvenootskap.

What captivated me about the DVS members was their level of self-confidence and the intelligence and clarity of many of their interactions during the discussion. I was further struck by how comfortable the DVS members appeared to be in themselves, their confidence to speak and contribute to the conversation, and their readiness to disagree if that was required. Dylan made an incisive comment towards the latter stages of the session, questioning why there were no 'Coloured' academics present. Dylan asked to what degree the SIP programme was inclusive and consultative in planning its activities. Up until this point in the meeting the parent representatives had not spoken; they were extremely awkward in this social space. Yet Dylan, who was only marginally younger and reared in the same neighbourhood as these parents of learners at RGHS, was forcefully questioning the purpose of our research and interrogating which individuals were benefitting from and consulted in our work. His sense of entitlement to speak in this 'White' woman's home struck me as being exceptionally unusual. I later assessed that it was underpinned by a solid sense of self-confidence, the institutional support of CRAAG and the backing of the DVS group.

From this discussion I subsequently decided to engage the DVS members in conversation, and seek their permission to work with them over the following months by observing their work and conducting interviews with each of them on a one-to-one basis. In the months that followed we built up a healthy relationship. I was invited to attend events that they held in Rosemary Gardens, one of which was a 'coffee bar' discussion on the topic of 'identity', with young people from the area. The decision to do ethnographic work with DVS was prompted by my interest in how the socialisation processes and dialogues that these young people were embroiled in, differed so markedly from parallel socialisation processes that I had observed at Rosemary Gardens High School.

### Site 3: Youth Amplified

When I first got involved in starting up the radio show, Youth Amplified, it was at the behest of my next-door neighbour who could not find a facilitator for a

children's educational slot at the radio station that he managed. The original idea was that I would help develop a format for the programme, which would focus on young people engaging with a variety of materials, such as documentary films, newspaper articles, music inserts, and contributions from guests. These activities would then form the basis for critical discussions. Given my background I suggested we work with materials that mostly explored themes of 'education in South Africa', but that we would also choose themes selected by the young people who participated in the programme. In the 18 months thereafter that I worked alongside the young people on the programme, we watched documentaries, read newspaper articles and academic texts and interviewed guests live on air. Some of these guests included members of DVS, as well as the junior mayor of Cape Town. After approaching the principals of various schools to ask their help in allowing students from their schools to participate on the show, we decided to focus on three schools, namely RGHS, a African township school Lukhanyo High, and the CIE.

In terms of contextualising the contribution of the radio show to the overall ethnographic study, I should note that my involvement on the radio programme encompassed two periods of engagement with participating youth. These offered interesting insights into how youth from quite different Cape Town communities engaged with each other, spoke about each other, and treated one another. In the first period of youth engagement in 2011, myself and 5-7 learners from each of RGHS, Lukhanyo High and the CIE met at the community radio station on Friday afternoons and explored various materials, before recording hour-long shows that were aired on Saturday mornings. In these segments I facilitated the discussions by asking questions and drawing learners into debate. Initially the show was called *Youth G2G* (Get-Together), a name chosen by the participating youth. Many of the shows produced interesting discussions on youth concerns, anxieties, and daily assumptions. In the second period of youth engagement, in 2012, it was decided to broadcast the show live on air once a month on Saturday mornings. By that time the station had suggested that participants from one other school be invited to avoid the show becoming stigmatised as solely consisting of 'marginalised youth'. A former

model C school called Barry Hertzog High School (BHHS) was contacted and the school agreed to put forward a set of willing learners to participate on Saturday mornings.

The introduction of the BHHS learners, however, brought a set of different challenges and caused significant turmoil and conflict. After an introductory meeting that involved the four schools, it was agreed that all of the students would come to the station to audition for the part of host/hostess, as well as collectively produce a jingle, decide on a name for the programme and plan for the first live show. For the introductory meeting, the youth participants were all asked to meet at the community radio station to audition for the part of host/hostess and to then collectively discuss their various responsibilities and inputs towards the other tasks. Admittedly, my being abroad at the time, attending an international conference, did not help this process. When I returned I discovered that the BHHS learners had been the only group that had attended the planning session and that they had decided on a name, *Youth Amplified*, for the show. Also, they had auditioned amongst themselves for the position of presenter and had then announced the outcome on facebook. Apparently the BHHS students were very annoyed at the no-show of the other participants, had taken the position that “this is not how we do things at our school”, and had then carried on and made decisions about the hosting and the planning of the first live show.

This course of events upset the learners from the other schools. They felt that the BHHS learners had no right to “take over” the programme and argued that they should have waited for the next meeting. Tracey, one of the learners I introduce in chapter seven, told me in an individual interview at the time that:

*They're snobs. They think everything has to go their way cause of their background, cause like they got a better education. They think they better. They forever making comments like that they 'like making things happen'. Like other people don't? It's like the first time, when we were there (the first six months of the show before it was broadcast live), it didn't happen cause it was just*

*recorded. Its like when they heard we on mxit, it's like they're using other technology... It's BBM and whatsapp and facebook.*

This incident raised a variety of issues both for the radio show and for my participation. I realised that I had clearly not dealt with learner perceptions regarding themselves and their peers from other schools. Some learners, including the RGHS students, felt that a hierarchy existed in terms of the different participating schools. With the introduction of BHHS learners I had to be much more sensitive to perceived favouritism towards certain learners. In order to resolve the conflict I proceeded to organise an afternoon of small group discussions at which the BHHS learners could explain their rationale for deciding on Youth Amplified as a name, discuss aspects which members of the groups liked and disliked about the name, and suggest alternatives. The BHHS learners explained that the name indicated that the show was a platform for debate within the wider Cape Town space and it provided opportunities for the voices of youth to be 'amplified' and made more audible in the broader society. After this process, it was agreed to keep the name *Youth Amplified*. It was also decided that the role of hosting the show would rotate every term.

This did not materialise, however, as no other learners were prepared to assume the responsibility to host the live show. Some tensions remained, but as the group worked together over the following months and as the programme developed, the learners collectively took ownership of the show and took pride in the fact that their families, immediate communities, as well as many others, were listening in to a programme to which they contributed. As such, Youth Amplified exemplified a process of engagement amongst youth, demonstrating forms of interaction from which all of the young people learnt. And as a place of ethnographic study, my personal contribution and involvement in the radio show highlighted how researchers could play a valuable role in facilitating such interactions.



Crucially, what held the different sites together for the research project was that young people from Rosemary Gardens were involved in each of the sites. While my time conducting fieldwork in Rosemary Gardens had led to extended networks with new groups of people that were mostly fortuitous, and unplanned, it was the ways in which young people from Rosemary Gardens engaged with different ideas and entered into different forms of dialogic learning that held the ethnographic focus together. This included the classrooms within the local high school, an alternative place constructed by youth in the neighbourhood, but outside of the school, and a place that I took part in initiating, beyond the boundaries of Rosemary Gardens, namely Youth Amplified. What was most useful about the latter was that the radio show provided opportunities to observe how youth from Rosemary Gardens interacted with peers who differed from them in terms of race, class, school and residential location.

#### Placing the three sites side by side

The sites that were selected for my multi-site ethnography are but a few of other possible research settings that I could have selected. I could, for example, have chosen to study the after-school homework sessions run by the Department of Cultural Affairs and Sports coaches. Or I could have chosen the school library, as facilitated by May Hughes, as a place where dialogue occurs and investigated how this contributes to young people's learning. In the end I chose to focus on classroom settings at RGHS because these are the traditional sites where learning is expected to occur and where the public assumes young people should be provided with sets of skills that enable them to thrive in later life. I then chose to investigate what learning could be derived from within a hip-hop movement like the Doodvenootskap due to my initial surprise at the ways in which members of this group appeared to evade the 'silencing' I observed at the school, and their ability to voice their views, forcefully, in alternative places. My goal was to try to make an explicit comparison between the school and the Doodvenootskap 'place', something that Weis & Dimitriadis (2008) suggest is a key strength of multi-site ethnography.

With regard to the third site, Youth Amplified, access to it was quite fortuitous. It was something that was unplanned and that I initially had to play a key role in designing. In this place the goal was to explore how young people from Rosemary Gardens would relate to and engage with materials that were relevant to their lives. While it could be said that I played a key part in supposedly kick-starting their 'agency' at Youth Amplified, my aim was to explore how learners from RGHS spoke directly to the poverty and the inequality that they experienced on a daily basis and how they conceptualized this in the company of peers. This third place was also intended to highlight what transpires when young people interact with different kinds of peers, away from learning places shaped by pressures from education department officials with regard to a formal curriculum and what is thought to be 'proper learning'.

As can be viewed from my selection of my three sites noted above, I consciously sought to make connections between places that illuminated how similar or the same young people engaged in dialogues with peers and older people, who operated in different contexts. My aim was to demonstrate, explicitly, how youth were provided with opportunities to use language and learn, dialogically, in these different places, and explore how the language that they use is interpreted and responded to by relevant others.

## **Data collection**

### **Introduction**

Rigorous empirical work, involving systematic and thorough data collection that generated detailed descriptions of what I observed and heard in the different places, accompanied the conceptual explorations. I managed the empirical work and theory generation dialectically, with each informing the other, as the research unfolded (Mills & Gale, 2010). The conceptual and empirical dimensions of the research therefore interacted through an ongoing iterative process, as initial interpretations were formulated and then reworked, whilst data was simultaneously collected in the field and then analysed and

reinterpreted in relation to theory. My empirical work is therefore theory-laden and selective (Phillips & Burbules, 2000).

By stating that my approach is 'theory-laden' I am following Jean and John Comaroff's (2012) notion of theory as enabling empirical work to be interpreted, but not determined through its lenses. The empirical data collection led to the reformulation and evolution of concepts and theory, as these were explored in new contexts. My work therefore utilises a *form* of grounded theory (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2012) that meant entering into Rosemary Gardens with concepts borrowed from Lefebvre (1991), Bourdieu (1977; 1991) & Bakhtin (1981; 1986), as well as from the literature of Sociology of Youth and Education. However, it also required spending sufficient time in such places collecting empirical 'evidence', in order to build on and challenge my conceptual framework. To emphasise, the research was therefore an iterative process that involved ongoing interactions between the empirical and conceptual/theoretical dimensions of the project (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2012: 48).

### Interviews and focus groups

The data generated in this study is all qualitative in nature and was collected through spending time in the three places, observing and journaling the events that transpired, and at strategic points, asking learners, Doodvenootskap members and educators if they would be willing to speak to me one-on-one. I have collected a great deal of empirical information through observations of classroom relations, as well as by recording and observing the words, actions and interactions of young people at Youth Amplified and within DVS.

In terms of individual interviews, I interviewed each of the 15 Youth Amplified learners at least once. Six of the DVS crew and 11 educators also participated in individual interviews. The interviews were semi-structured in that I followed an interview schedule (appendix C), however I also asked questions and followed up on lines of conversation which deviated from the interview schedule, but which were relevant to my research question (Kvale, 1996;

Maxwell, 1996). Flexibility in the interviews promoted the exploration of "gaps, contradictions and difficulties" perceived by the participants (Burman, 1994: 51). I broadly followed Hollway & Jefferson's (2000) biographical-interpretative method. This method aims to use open-ended questions as much as possible, in order to provoke subjective meanings. In addition, the interviews were designed to elicit stories that contained personal significance and encouraged free associations or 'whatever comes to mind', in order to tap into responses that were not formulaic (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000). This semi-structured method was used in order to probe what learners, DVS members and educators found meaningful and enjoyable in terms of their participation in dialogues, with others, in the three places. I did not want to elicit a prescribed set of responses based on what participants assumed would be answers that I desired. Place and dialogue were therefore approached in an open-ended way, allowing the participants to define their relationships with these sites on their own terms.

I also conducted four focus groups, with four learners participating in each focus group. Students in their final year of school, or 'matric', were involved in these discussions that explored what young people enjoyed and did not enjoy about school, as well as their perceptions of learning, language and dialogue at school and in other places. The advantage of focus groups as a data collection method is that they allow the researcher to observe interactions between a smaller subset of participants (Madriz, 2000). I wanted to promote comfortable dialogue with the learners and reduce my possible influence as researcher, and thus concentrated instead on promoting multi-vocality amongst participants. Madriz (2000) notes that the group situation reduces the effects of the researcher by shifting the balance of power towards the participants, who have a numeric advantage, in comparison to individual interviews where there is one researcher and one interviewee. This technique promoted comfortable dialogue between myself and RGHS students.

## Observations

Observation is central to ethnographic research (Angrosino & Mays de Perez, 2000; Werner & Schoepfle, 1987). Each of the places that I have researched has involved observation and different degrees of participant observation. At Youth Amplified my participation was most extensive, as I organised the show and made strategic decisions regarding its content and format. At RGHS I also began to participate, serving on the Development Trust and helping in classrooms. It is now accepted that participation does not necessarily compromise the validity of the research data, but that immersion and varying degrees of 'membership', within the group being researched, can stimulate an insider's perspective (Angrosino & Mays de Perez, 2000; Werner & Schoepfle, 1987). This is in contrast to participant observation where it is important that the researcher makes a role for him or herself that is clearly conveyed to the participants (Angrosino & Mays de Perez, 2000).

In multi-site ethnography different kinds of observations mean that the researcher needs to reinvent him or herself in the range of different research sites. These roles are not static but evolve over time and are negotiated between the researcher and the participants. The situational roles played by researchers are also formed by the identities that researchers bring to the context and how these interact with the identities of the participants (Angrosino & Mays de Perez, 2000). In each of the three places of this study my role was significantly different. At Youth Amplified I acted as a facilitator and organiser of the programme, meaning that my identity as researcher was more substantially 'hidden' from participants, as we simply proceeded with the task of producing a youth radio show. This allowed for substantial observations in a context where youth were not constantly aware of being researched and where interactions between peers from different schools could be observed. My role vis-à-vis the Doodvenootskap crew included being perceived as a mentor type figure, as they often called me or invited me to meet with them when they wanted advice or help with a particular challenge that they were facing. The group also knew

that I was involved at the community radio station and that I was as a 'student', as they often inquired regarding the progress of my studies. In relation to teachers at RGHS, I was initially seen as the EMEP employee who facilitated the Saturday morning youth leadership sessions with Raymond, the 'EMEP' sessions as they called them. Later on, educators further knew that I was a PhD student and this academic project contributed to different perceptions of me.

In terms of observing classroom dialogues and interactions, in total I observed 16 teachers in their classroom environments at RGHS, usually for the duration of half a day per teacher. There is only one break time at RGHS, a decision that was made in order to minimise the opportunities for students to leave school during the course of the day. I therefore accompanied one educator to class in the morning and another in the period after the interval. I made notes regarding the classroom place that I was visiting, documenting the appearance of the walls and the condition of the room in terms of whether there were broken windows or paint eroding from the walls. I made use of an observation schedule in order to document the events that occurred in the classroom (see appendix D). I divided a blank piece of paper in half, writing down everything that the teacher said on the left hand side and everything that the students said on the right hand side. I did not record these classroom observation sessions as I felt that this would be intimidating to the educators. I attempted to make myself as unobtrusive as possible, getting on with my work while sitting at one of the unused desks in the classroom. Werner & Schoepfle (1987) distinguish between 'descriptive', 'focused' and 'selective' observation. In 'descriptive' observation the researcher notes all of the micro details of the context, whereas 'focused' observation involves excluding certain objects, activities or people from the analysis, as they are deemed to be irrelevant. 'Selective' observation entails observing particular attributes of interactions, for example the kind of language used in the classroom. My observations were 'focused' on the learning place in question and the social relations and language that constituted these places and they were 'selective' in terms of instances where dialogue took place.

During my fieldwork and observations of the DVS place, two music albums were produced that involved the DVS crew. I thus included the lyrics of these albums as data to be analysed. The first album was created by CRAAG a community organisation in Rosemary Gardens, however DVS members contributed to its production. The second is an album called *Skollyhood: realities face*, made by one member of the DVS crew, a young man whose emcee name is Ssslang, although many of the DVS members also contributed to this album. I transcribed the lyrics of the different tracks on the album and these have been analysed and contributed to interpreting the DVS 'place'.

As a last note, all observations were followed by intensive journaling after returning from the field. I would regularly consult journal entries, noting issues that needed to be followed up in future individual interviews or to be informally posed to participants whilst in the field.

### Insider/outsider relations

The variety of roles that I played in the different places meant that I developed a complex set of statuses vis-à-vis the research participants, both as an insider and as an outsider. As is clear from examples in the prologue and in chapter five, as a white, upper middle-class, English-speaking researcher, I was in many ways more privileged than the participants in this research project and an outsider in relation to this community. This meant that I needed to be sensitive to inherent power differentials between youth from Rosemary Gardens and myself, as well as being cognisant that I did not inadvertently exploit these young people. Youth may have participated in the research activities with the hope of compensation, monetary or otherwise, meaning that the purposes and outcomes of the research process needed to be made clear to the research subjects. As an external person entering this community I also needed to be wary not to exoticise, stereotype or other the group of people that I was studying. My outsider status meant that I had to be aware of prejudices and assumptions that I may have harboured regarding the participants and the neighbourhood in question. For example, on one occasion I made the mistake of assuming that I could simply send a notice home with a learner, to be signed

by a parent, hence allowing the learner to attend the youth media camp organised by the community radio station. I was surprised when the student in question told me that her father wanted me to call him and explain what the purpose of the camp was and describe the kinds of activities that had been planned for the weekend. On this occasion I was guilty of insufficient communication with parents of participants in the research process, partly due to teachers' descriptions- and media stereotypes- of parents in working class neighbourhoods being disinterested in their children's activities. This example pertained to the ethnographic process, but I also had to be aware of my assumptions during data analysis and interpretation.

The most challenging component of being an outsider in relation to Rosemary Gardens' residents was the fact that I was not a native Afrikaans or Kaapse Afrikaans speaker. This meant that I surely missed some subtle meanings and insights contained in the words and actions of the research participants. I dealt with this challenge, partially, through asking the young people what terms meant if I didn't understand and by being honest about what I did and did not follow. Recorded interviews were shared with native Afrikaans speakers, who helped me with translation and the meaning of words that I did not understand. To some degree not being a native speaker was also an advantage, as it allowed me to probe the meaning of words deeply, as someone who was genuinely ignorant and the young people, as experts, could explain terms to me. This eradicated some of the power differences between youth from this neighbourhood and myself.

Despite these challenges contained in being an outsider in relation to Rosemary Gardens youth, recent perspectives on insiders/outsiders generally agree that researchers rarely completely fit into one category or the other. Furthermore, complexities are inherent to both insider and outsider positions and the boundaries between them are often not easily demarcated (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009; Merriam et al, 2001). I was afforded partial 'insider status', due to the fact that I was introduced to educators and learners of Rosemary Gardens through a colleague who had grown up in this neighbourhood, meaning that I was perceived, to some degree, as a 'friend' of the school. I worked with young



people on the radio show and the youth leadership sessions, I served on the Rosemary Gardens Development Trust and educators were aware that I was also working for an NGO that conducted whole school and youth development type work. Through these activities I built up trust with educators and learners at the school and was seen to be contributing to the school and not simply extracting data for my own personal gain. I felt that this status as an insider increased over time. The challenge was therefore to remain aware of my biases and prejudices, as well as my privileges and the limits of my linguistic capital, while simultaneously acting in a manner that was authentic and genuine, one that offered reciprocal benefits to the participants of my study.

### **Analysis and interpretation**

As mentioned, the analysis of my data is one component of a broader iterative process involving the utilisation of theory, data collection, analysis and interpretation. Hence, data collection and analysis were partially conducted through the theoretical lenses I garnered from work on dialogue, space and the Sociology of Youth. Burawoy (1998) notes that rigorous reflexive research makes use of prior theory in the creation of new theory, in contradistinction to some versions of grounded theory that perceive analysis and interpretation to operate on a theoretical 'tabula rasa'.

Intensive analysis occurred post data collection. All of the live radio shows, individual interviews and focus groups were transcribed in full. I translated the data myself. When quotations appear in chapters five, six, seven and eight I state underneath the quotation if the words were originally uttered in Afrikaans. If a mixture of English and Afrikaans were uttered I state:

*Translated from the Afrikaans. English words that were used by the interviewee are in **bold**.*

This is necessary because the language used by participants, and the mixing of words from different languages during discussions, is central to the analysis.

A thematic analysis was then performed on the transcripts. Thematic analysis is a useful method for identifying and describing recurring patterns that are present in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). A thematic analysis can either provide a rich overall portrayal of the dataset or it can give an in-depth analysis of either one or a few aspects of the material (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I used the analysis to illuminate themes related to my specific research question regarding how young people learn through dialogue in different places. Analysing the data and identifying themes therefore meant being cognisant of the fact that I was ultimately attempting to analyse learning through different dialogues and language that emerged in the three places. I was also interpreting what these dialogues meant to the young people involved and theorising the broader social and cultural relevance of these interactions. I utilised Braun & Clarke's (2006) phases of thematic analysis outlined in Table 5 below:

**Table 5.** Phases of thematic analysis (adapted from Braun & Clarke, 2006)

- |  |
|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Familiarizing yourself with your data: Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.</li><li>2. Generating initial codes: Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.</li><li>3. Searching for themes: Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.</li><li>4. Reviewing themes: Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis.</li><li>5. Defining and naming themes: Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.</li></ol> |
|--|

The transcripts were coded through identifying recurring themes that related to learning, dialogue and place. The observational data, field notes, background information documents, and other data sources were then also analysed and coded, pinpointing recurring themes related to my research question. For each of the places, RGHS, Youth Amplified and the Doodvenootskap, the coded transcripts were then triangulated with the other data sources. So, for example, if a theme was observed in Youth Amplified shows, as well as in individual interviews and aspects of this theme were noticed and recorded in my field notes, it was identified as a prominent theme.

**Table 6.** Themes that emerged from data sets: initial codes

| <b>Youth amplified</b> | <b>DVS</b>      | <b>RGHS</b>          |
|------------------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| Race                   | Rapping         | Real Space           |
| Inequality             | School learning | Vocational education |
| Learning               | Khoi/San        | Cultural deficiency  |
| Conflict               | Race            | Values               |
| Aspirations            | Human rights    | Language             |
| Communities            |                 | Discipline           |
| School institutional   |                 |                      |

|               |  |                                      |
|---------------|--|--------------------------------------|
| culture       |  | Dialogue                             |
| Language      |  | Teaching methods                     |
| Social Change |  | Relationships: teachers-<br>students |
|               |  | School subjects                      |

The next phase in the analysis process involved assessing how themes related to one another, in terms of their relevance to dialogic learning at Youth Amplified, RGHS and DVS. I used the coded data from interviews, focus groups, radio shows and observations, as well as other forms of background information, such as the history of the community radio station, RGHS and the Doodvenootskap, in order to analyse how language was used in these places and how dialogues functioned. Different themes generated new ways of understanding language and dialogue in these places and indicated where similarities and differences existed between the different sites. The temporal aspect of the analytic process - in other words the fact that the three places were initially analysed individually and then compared - also influenced the overall analysis. I analysed the data pertaining to Youth Amplified first, which led to insights that did influence or structure subsequent analyses. A final component of the analysis involved holding the three places that comprised the multi-site ethnography in juxtaposition to one another, in order to make comparative interpretations regarding dialogic learning. Chapter eight consists of a comparative analysis of the three places.

Dialogic learning was analysed through a combination of tools from linguistic ethnography and by analysing the thematic data through the conceptual/theoretical lenses of Bakhtin (1981; 1986), Bourdieu (1991) and Lefebvre (1991). Ethno-linguists have also conducted studies of classroom talk, analysing the content and function of spoken language and the effects that the use of language has on student identity, agency and learning (Mercer, 2010).

Such studies have focused on the following kinds of questions in relation to talk and schooling.

- How are the languages/language varieties of different cultures recognized and used in schools?
- Is current educational policy sensitive to the linguistic and cultural reality of school life?
- How does dialogue promote learning, shared understanding and conceptual development?
- How does classroom discourse enable, or inhibit, the expression of identities?

(From Mercer, 2010)

I used the above questions that have emerged from the field of linguistic ethnography to analyse my coded data, examining how social relations in the three places enable or inhibit language use and dialogue. This entailed delving into the manner in which youth use language in order to understand concepts, contexts and themselves (Mercer, 2010). The impact of wider operations of power on young people's use of language was also an integral component of the analysis.

I therefore explored how young people's use of language influences dialogue, how it informs the construction of their identities and how dialogic interactions are mediated by the places in which dialogues occur. As places are not closed containers, but inter-linked in the lives of youth, this also meant looking at how young people's forms of language transfer between places, as they move across contexts. Thus, the learning process was analysed by excavating how knowledge and understanding are co-created through the contestation of shared meanings. This occurs in dialogues, through the medium of the language that is used between young people and significant others, in particular places.

In addition to data from interviews and observations, the history of the three places, and of Rosemary Gardens and Cape Town more generally, was helpful in analysing how place structured learning. These accounts included information on how the evolution of places or sites like RGHS, the Doodvenootskap and Youth Amplified related to the broader history of apartheid, the Group Areas Act (1950) and the policy of forced removals, and how their establishment or focus was influenced by this. The history of the community radio station, for example, provided insights into some of the practices that influenced the production of Youth Amplified. Similarly, information on conscious hip-hop, as it has developed both in South Africa and in the United States, provided perspective on the utterances of DVS members. These histories buttressed analyses of language and dialogue and provided rich contextual information to aid in framing learning in each of the places.

My methodology therefore incorporates conversations that occur across and between fields of study, utilising insights from linguistics, education, sociology, anthropology, geography, psychology and history. History is a fundamental part of this conversation, something that I believe is imperative in the post-apartheid South African situation. This is because many social interactions are informed by the legacies of the past and the ways in which they have structured forms of inequality. In this study history manifests through the ways in which practices are situated within socio-historical structures and power relations.

I have therefore adopted tenets of the theory of critical realism for my research. Critical realism explicates how structures shape and limit human actions (Nightingale & Cromby, 2002). In other words, this theory explores how practices and experiences are grounded in and structured by material conditions, such as embodiment, materiality, aesthetics and power (Nightingale & Cromby, 2002). To expand, critical realism states that we can only know the external world through the language used to describe it, but that these descriptions are embedded in real ideological structures, institutional frameworks and the operations of power (Burman, 1991). It is impossible to

know objects and external realities except through descriptions of these phenomena (Gavey, 1997; Willig, 1999). However, whilst relativist social constructionists say referentiality and objectivity are impossible- that 'things' and whatever backdrop against which these things stand out are taken to be nothing more than social convention- critical realism states that objectivity and referentiality are possible, though they are always, partial, limited and dependent on more research (Nightingale & Cromby, 2002). Hence, we only have knowledge of these historical structures through language and taxonomies that represent these real structures. Descriptions, themes and concepts that were meaningful to the young people themselves, were therefore taken as cues for further inquiry into how these phenomena are shaped by the socio-historical contexts in which these young people live.

To sum up my approach then, by conducting a rigorous empirical and theoretically informed study of young people's linguistic and dialogical practices, in relation to societal structures that blockade and/or enhance their learning, I believe it is possible to understand how young people's actions and practices reinforce or subvert these structures.

### **A note on ethics**

Permission to conduct the study was granted by Stellenbosch University after going through its various ethics processes and committees that oversee research done by the university's students and academics. As part of that process, it was documented that permission was obtained from the Western Cape Education Department (see Appendix E), to gain access to Rosemary Gardens High School.

Permission to do research on the shows produced at the community radio station was also granted, as well as the required permission from CRAAG, the civic organisation, to have access to, communicate with, and to use data

collected from interaction with members located at the Global Hope Foundation building.

Furthermore, permission to participate at Youth Amplified was obtained from the young people involved and from their parents, using the radio station's own informed consent document. Individual members of the hip-hop group also signed informed consent forms that agreed to allow me to use the data collected in interviews with them and from observations in their environments (after further clearance from them, the data was transcribed).

Lastly, permission was obtained from all of the young people who participated in individual interviews, as well as that of their parents. Each of them were provided with and required to sign informed consent and assent forms (appendix F) that explained the research process and the purpose of the study.

As part of this process of gaining their permissions, it was agreed that all of the names of schools, educators, and other participants in this study would be fully anonymised and that pseudonyms would be used in the written work. In the thesis I have fully observed these agreements and have further observed all of the formal protocols required by the education discipline, the faculty, and the university.

In conducting this multi-site ethnography and witnessing a variety of dialogic learning interactions that came out of the research methods that were chosen, it is my hope that the study will contribute to a broadening of discussions around research ethics in South Africa. In this regard, I hope to highlight the messiness of research within communities and explore ways of facilitating alternative and experimental methodologies that offer new and different insights into the ways of living and thinking *with* people, in a range of different places.

I could assert for example that my study promoted forms of participatory research that hold great potential for working with young people as a way of opening up places of dialogue and for demonstrating alternative pedagogical practices. The discussions with youth off-air at the community radio station, as well as during live Youth Amplified shows, later with focus groups that explored important learner experiences of their schooling, and in debates with members



of DVS, functioned to create vibrant dialogic learning places, benefitting both the 'researcher' and 'participants'.

In comprising intergenerationally diverse groups of people collectively trying to understand an issue (Cammorota & Fine, 2008), my study brought together multiple inquirers and knowledge producers reflecting on their social worlds and sharing a range of perspectives. It took cues from what appeared to be meaningful to the young people themselves, rather than working from a predetermined agenda and set of research questions (Cammorota & Fine, 2008). And finally, the knowledge that emerged from the study was critical in nature and understood through historically situated power relations. As such, the study could point to ways of rethinking or expanding approaches to participatory research that look at how it contributes to the development of the participants and acknowledges and is respectful of their knowledge pool.

In my study young people functioned as active contributors and beneficiaries and were valuable reservoirs of knowledge. This was achieved by using research methods that engaged *with* young people, initiated places of reciprocal and respectful reflection throughout, and generated places where different parties could learn from each other. The study comprised a form of research that Michelle Fine (1994) calls 'working the hyphens': engaging with subjugated groups and their struggles, simultaneously eroding the social categories that function to separate researchers from their research subjects. I argue that by producing collective dialogues researchers can resist 'othering' or exoticising their research participants, and instead empower 'voices' that are normally silenced (Fine, 1994).

## **Conclusion**

During a student conference in 2011, a fellow student pressurised me to choose whether my project used a 'positivist', 'interpretative' or 'critical' paradigm. She added that she thought that mine was using a critical paradigm.

This raised an interesting dilemma for me. Given that a paradigm represents a particular worldview regarding what constitutes knowledge and truth and

comprises of a shared belief and value system in terms of the kinds of research questions that are considered to be worthy of exploration, my immediate concern was that for this 'educational research project' I needed to demonstrate greater assurance of my designated approach. My view of research is that it is a really messy business and that it often involves a great deal of improvisation and continual reassessment, especially when conducted in contexts that are very unpredictable and precarious.

That said, research projects must always have a consistent set of research practices that involve the systematic collection of information, deep reading and adaptation of theoretical concepts and texts, and intense reflection on the purposes and interests associated with the research. And such practices always have to be adhered to and carried out even though the researcher cannot know exactly what the final product will look like.

Deciding on 'a paradigm' therefore pertains to choosing methods that are conventionally used to interrogate problems, and a set of shared understandings as to what model responses or 'solutions' to these questions should comprise (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). One component of this therefore involves a history and tradition of approaching particular kinds of research questions in specific ways, with conventional sorts of solutions generated by the researchers. It is normally argued that through these activities a communal identity is created and recreated through the methods and solutions that are generally offered for particular problems (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). Notably, my project did not stay within the boundaries of a particular approach and could be described as being both critical and interpretivist. For me, my criteria was simply that research questions and methods needed to be coherent at all times, have strong logical links to one another, and show how the relationships between different components of the research project were consciously decided and justified.

As such, in this study my methodology used different data collection tools and analytic devices. More than anything else I sought to find ways of doing compassionate research that got to know and understand the young people that participated in the project, that then could be communicated to others about what learning in different places meant to these young people.



## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **DIALOGIC LEARNING AT ROSEMARY GARDENS HIGH SCHOOL**

*In those days we imagined ourselves being kept in some kind of holding pen, waiting to be released into our lives. And when that moment came our lives- and time itself- would speed up. How were we to know that our lives had in any case begun, that some advantage had already been gained, some damage already inflicted? Also that our release would only be into a larger holding pen, whose boundaries would at first be indiscernible.*

Julian Barnes, 2011: 9

*Teachers neither simply act within classrooms nor entirely act on the part of the school as an institution. Rather, teachers "enact" classrooms in relation to other space-times and, hence, create social spaces in which one thing is more likely to be said than another or one position for participants is more available than another.*

Leander, 2001: 642

#### **'Guns, words and ordeal': Rosemary Gardens High School**

In this chapter I explore whether and how young people were able to learn through dialogue at Rosemary Gardens High School, during my research there in 2012. Answering this question requires an initial understanding of how Real, Imagined and Lived socio-spatial relations impact on dialogic learning in this place. The disruptive effects of Real space on the Rosemary Gardens community

was one of the most consistent themes to emerge from the data generated through observations, interviews and focus groups with teachers and learners. Overcrowding, systemic violence and entrenched poverty, exhibited through learners coming to school irritable, hungry and without stationary or complete school uniforms, all impacted on learning in the school place. Learning at RGHS cannot, therefore, be divorced from the community of Rosemary Gardens or insulated from the social challenges that exist in this neighbourhood.

Learning at RGHS was also hampered by representations of the school place, predominantly produced through descriptions of the 'kinds' of learners who attend this institution and the 'quality' of the linguistic resources that they bring to school. Students and educators described learners' linguistic resources as impoverished. Students said that the medium of instruction utilised in classrooms operated at a 'higher' level, in comparison to the language that they use at home or in informal places in the community. The school was therefore Imagined to be a place where superior forms of language and culture legitimately exist. Learners who attend the school state that these linguistic practices and dispositions need to be attained and utilised if one wishes to participate in, and benefit from, this institution.

Despite demonstrating a great deal of care for learners' physical wellbeing, educators reinforced these depictions of deficient students. Teachers generally described learners as better suited to technical and vocational forms of education that are not included within the mainstream academic curriculum. Real and Imagined socio-spatial relations therefore inhibited learning, as dialogue in the RGHS school place either took the form of silence, as large numbers of these youth discontinue their schooling after grade 9, or it was heavily hierarchical, prescribed, controlling and unidirectional. Learners' contributions to dialogues were generally restricted to merely receiving educators' utterances. A small number of students displayed interesting forms of Lived space, either through enduring the school system and attaining academic success, or by continuing to attend school and being able to express extreme distrust with society at large, of which schooling was perceived as one component.

### **A note on school discontinuation**

In 2012, there were 412 grade 9s and 60 grade 12s attending RGHS. The school principal stated that this trend, of the number of learners per grade sharply decreasing after grade 9, had remained consistent over the many years that he had been an educator at the school. Beginning in grade 10, a large number of young people therefore discontinue their formal education at Rosemary Gardens High School. This chapter contributes to attempts to understand the reasons for this phenomenon in more detail, a trend that has been noted in working-class former 'Coloured' schools in the greater Cape Town area (Bray et al, 2010). RGHS is not unique in its inability to retain learners in the higher grades as similar numbers are observed in high schools with a comparable demographic make-up (Bray et al, 2010). However, a chapter on dialogue in the school place needs to acknowledge, from the outset, that this pattern, consisting of large numbers of young people not returning to school, constitutes a form of dialogic suppression, as those that are likely to offer dissent and challenge school practices, policies and ideologies are ushered out of the school system (Fine, 1991). Another, complementary interpretation of this mass exodus is that many 'Coloured' youth simply choose not to participate in, or potentially learn from the dialogues that may occur in this place, as they do not believe in the value of formal education in its current form, in the second decade of the twenty first century. These and other reasons for the high numbers of young people not returning to school after grade 9 are expanded upon in the chapter.

### **"The effects of that in the learner": the impact of Real space on learning at RGHS**

Learning at RGHS cannot be understood in isolation from the Real spatial practices that proliferate in the community of Rosemary Gardens. This neighbourhood is conceived, spatially, as an area plagued by poverty, high rates of unemployment, normalised violence and overcrowding. These distressing

social challenges seep into the school space. The deputy principal who has been at the school for more than 30 years said:

*K: What I don't like here is the effects of poverty. You see it everyday in your children. They come to school badly dressed, some come to school without having had breakfast, hungry. Coming to school without the necessary stationary and books. Coming to school without having slept last night because the neighbours had a party the entire night. I spoke about the width between the two doors (the front doors of apartments in the 'kortse'<sup>7</sup>), if I step out of my flatlet I almost walk into your sitting room. The close proximity of one flat, that has an influence on some of our learners. They come in noisy. You have to take a few minutes to tell them you are in a class now, I would like to do some work. This is not the street. So disciplinary problems would be another issue here that I don't like. Then the effect of gangsterism on our learners, the effects of drug abuse and alcohol abuse, that's the ugly side of my work.*

*A: by the learners?*

*K: The effects of that in the learners. It's sad to see a learner coming to school, single parent, mommy is a drug addict, alcoholic. That's the sad side of education. But I'm an optimist, I believe that out of the darkest corner, from the filth of the earth will come the whitest lily that you can imagine. I believe in every child, that they have the ability to become a lawyer, doctor, professor. I'm considered stern and very strict in my classes, but I would also like to think that I'm a very human person. I love to raise children, I love to lead them. And as a teacher we must remember that today's child is tomorrow's adult, today's learner is tomorrow your friend, that may even be tomorrow your husband or tomorrow your wife. That has happened.*

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<sup>7</sup> Areas that were constructed by the apartheid state in the early 1970s that were intended for habitation by people classified as 'Coloured', are easily identifiable by the blocks of apartments that were built in these areas. These apartment blocks became known as the 'kortse' or 'courts'.

This quotation provides a rich description of the overlapping Real and Imagined spatial interactions that play out between the school and the Rosemary Gardens community. Rosemary Gardens is a product of apartheid ‘forced removals’<sup>8</sup> and is uncomfortably congested and overcrowded, making cohabitation frustrating for its residents. Real space in the neighbourhood of Rosemary Gardens has a substantial bearing on learning at the school, as overcrowded living conditions result in students becoming agitated and externalising some of the frustrations that they experience in their domestic situations, during the school day at RGHS. Schools are often places where students vent some of the frustrations that they endure in their neighbourhoods and at home (McFadden & Munns, 2002). Educators stated that learners regularly arrive at school tired and unfed, a state of affairs that militates against attempts to conduct teaching and learning. For many learners the ‘feeding scheme’ school meal, which all learners are entitled to receive, but many rejected due to the stigma attached to it, is their first meal of the day. Rosemary Gardens classrooms, homes and neighbourhoods therefore need to be understood as containing porous boundaries that have reciprocal consequences for each other, as they form inter-connected components of these young people’s lives (Leander, Phillips & Taylor, 2010).

The behaviour which students display at school, often linked to the effects of overcrowding, noise and other forms of physical frustration that they experience at home, lead to educators feeling that they need to impress on learners that the school is not the ‘street’: the ‘street’ is conceived, by educators, as a proxy for the homes and the community that learners inhabit, contexts that were described by teachers as boundariless, unruly places of a questionable moral order. The equation of learners’ homes and community with the ‘street’ is derogatory, as the ‘street’ raises connotations that these learners’ existence is similar to that of homeless people who live outside on ‘the street’. It is therefore not surprising that there was a belief amongst educators that “*just about every single problem starts in the home*”, as one teacher said. Educators at RGHS therefore perceive a component of their role, a prerequisite in order for effective learning to occur, to

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<sup>8</sup> ‘Forced removals’ followed the Group Areas Act (1950) that legally segregated groups by race. Many people were forced to leave their homes in, for example, the inner-city and a great number of homes were razed to the ground.



consist of insulating the school place from the 'street'. In this way teachers attempt to resocialise these young people and modify the uninhibited behaviour that they believe is problematically learnt beyond the school walls.

Educators regularly emphasised the importance of 'discipline' at school, stressing that 'discipline' was necessary in order to create conditions that are likely to buttress learning. 'Discipline' was one of the most common terms used by educators at RGHS; the task of maintaining discipline was seen as a necessary accomplishment prior to and during effective teaching and learning. The remnants of disorder, presumed by educators to be inherent in places that constitute learners' lives outside of the school, are therefore understood as needing to be quelled in the school place through forms of discipline. Discipline is largely instilled through the everyday spatial practices initiated by teachers. At RGHS, the young people are forced to form lines outside of classrooms before entering, their uniforms and grooming are inspected and teachers ensure that nobody is chewing gum or eating food. Once inside the classroom, teachers and learners greet one another.

Corporal punishment also melted into the normalised violence that is part of daily life at RGHS. Corporal punishment is still used at RGHS, despite being outlawed as assault in the South African Schools Act (1996). I observed late learners getting a ruler on the hand or unruly students getting a little cane on the buttocks. The educator who matric learners unanimously named as the 'best teacher' admitted, *"I still hit them, I give them a hiding because I love them. I hit them with that duster."*

My observations at RGHS led me to conclude that corporal punishment was not used to inflict serious bodily injury on learners and I did not see any beating that looked particularly painful. It was used to demonstrate an unquestionable hierarchy and set of power relations, to maintain discipline and order within a place that educators perceived as surrounded by chaos.

However, this practice demonstrates how disciplinary measures utilised by RGHS educators contravene McFadden & Munns' (2002) assertion that at crucial moments of engagement between marginalised youth and the school, cultural

and institutional support for resistance can be highly beneficial. Resistance is often a key component of identity formation in adolescence and an outward expression of the cultural displacement working-class youth may feel in the school setting (McFadden & Munns, 2002). Not only does corporal punishment suppress resistance and dialogue, it infantilises these young people who realise that *“we still get hidings at our school, you don’t get that at the ‘White’ schools”*, as one RGHS learner told the group at Youth Amplified. These observations are supported by the research report written by the doctoral students from Vanderbilt University, which stated that:

*Several learners reported that one of the main aspects of school they did not like was being hit by teachers for coming in late or for having a wrong answer.*

(Craven et al, 2012: 42)

Another unpopular disciplinary practice that learners reported in the study conducted by the Vanderbilt University students, one that also militates against dialogic learning, was that teachers regularly forced students to leave the classroom. According to that piece of research, learners said that their favourite teachers warned students prior to ejecting them from class, or allowed learners to sit at the front of the classroom, instead of removing them (Craven et al, 2012). On the other hand, teachers perceived as students’ least favourite educators removed learners without warning. The practice of requiring students to leave the classroom may lead to young people also leaving the school for the remainder of the day, seeking alternative forms of stimulation beyond the school walls. It also communicates to youth that teachers feel that they are unwanted in the classroom. Disciplinary practices such as corporal punishment and removing learners from class functioned to quash potential dialogic learning amongst young people at the school, as these actions silenced and infantilised students.

RGHS teachers’ words and actions, in relation to learners at their school, did not exclusively function in order to maintain control: some educators’ attitudes illuminated their beliefs that these young people are located beneath educators in the social hierarchy. For example, the reference to the *“darkest corner, the filth of the earth”* and the possible emergence of the *“whitest lily”* is steeped in racial and

evangelical connotations, as well as the perceived questionable morality of Rosemary Gardens residents. This educator implies that the “filth”, poverty and other social problems that exist within the boundaries of Rosemary Gardens, ‘soil’ its inhabitants, physically, morally and symbolically. Thus, some educators believe that these learners are in need of cultural upliftment, including modification to their moral dispositions, linguistic repertoires and other social and bodily practices. Uplifting RGHS learners contains connotations of race and class transformation, as education and schooling, delivered by middle-class (albeit ‘Coloured’) educators are implied to have a sanitising effect on students, eradicating the ‘brownness’ or “filth” from these working-class bodies and, in the best case scenario, producing “white lilies”. Some educators’ attitudes therefore delved into issues of morality, as well as implying that they, as educators, perform a particular kind of role in learners’ moral development.

There are signs that, at times, educators believe these practices to be futile. For example, in the quotation above Mr Konrad says that the effects of substance abuse are *‘in’* the learner, meaning that regardless of whether it is students or their parents partaking in substance abuse, the result is ultimately lodged ‘inside’ the students; it is insinuated almost to comprise a component of their DNA or biological makeup, meaning that efforts to modify associated behaviour and promote learning amongst students are somewhat in vain.

Despite these pessimistic educator observations regarding the Rosemary Gardens neighbourhood and the detrimental effects it has on youth development, the educator states that he does indeed believe in the ability of RGHS learners and that they hold the potential to attain learned professions in law, medicine and academia. He expresses his passion towards aiding in the socialisation of these young people, using the word “love” twice. My fieldwork led me to the conclusion that the vast majority of the Rosemary Gardens educators conducted their work in a thoroughly professional manner and that they were deeply emotionally invested in and cared for the wellbeing of these young people. However, there was always a patronising, hierarchical dimension to educator-learner relationships. For example, these sentiments of caring for learners, in the quotation above, are expressed in relation to the future: that through his “love” to lead/raise children,

they may *become* doctors and lawyers and “today’s learner is *tomorrow* your friend”, or spouse. Future oriented beliefs imply that educators do not validate learners’ humanity in the present, or value and take an interest in their linguistic capital as it currently exists. Dismissing learners’ prevailing linguistic capital, as the remainder of this chapter demonstrates, undermines students’ aspirations in terms of what they believe their futures may hold. Attitudes of irreverence towards learners quell dialogic forms of learning. The hierarchical, patriarchal relations at RGHS therefore functioned to silence learners and to limit dialogic learning at the school.

Returning to the Real spatial relations between the school and community, attempts have been made to insulate the school from the violence and “filth” that exists beyond its borders, as one educator said:

*15 years ago the school was burgled every night. Now we have panic buttons in the class and there are security guards. But there are still gang fights here on the school premises at night. The security guards locked themselves in a classroom. They grew up in the area so they can’t apprehend the people.*

Perimeter fencing and security guards are measures taken to protect the school and its resources from people who reside in the Rosemary Gardens neighbourhood, people who are believed to comprise a threat. While physical divisions have been created between the Rosemary Gardens community and the school, these divisions remain permeable. The fluid boundaries between the school and community are demonstrated by the fact that the security guards were reared and live in Rosemary Gardens, meaning that action taken against trespassers could lead to retributive consequences, thus endangering the security personnel. The violence that is widespread in the neighbourhood of Rosemary Gardens therefore seeps into the school population and site, affecting its physical infrastructure and impacting upon learning in the school place.

Correlations between school and community violence have been confirmed by other research. A large South African survey (n=5939) conducted by Burton & Leonschut (2013) found that 60.5% of learners who claimed that crime was a

problem in their neighbourhood had also experienced violence at school, whereas only 46.5% of those who were not victims of school violence said that crime was a problem in their neighbourhood. Furthermore, 63.8% of learners who had experienced violence at school claimed to have witnessed a fight in their neighbourhood, compared to the group of non-victims of school violence, of which only 44.4% had witnessed a fight in their community. Young people that are victims of violent actions at school are therefore more likely to be reared in violent communities, meaning that the underlying social problems that lead to violence affect the same South African schools and neighbourhoods. Schools and communities cannot, therefore, be understood in isolation from one another, or from the deeper societal problems that impact upon both of these places.

Examples of violence that occurred in the neighbourhood of Rosemary Gardens during my fieldwork in 2012, and which by association affected the school community, included one grade nine learner who was killed in gang crossfire and a matric learner who survived being shot in the face. A group of students was suspended for sodomising a boy on the school grounds and an educator was physically attacked by a group of learners. The principal names his worst school day as the one in which he found a dead body of a six-year old in room 72. I was asked to leave the school on one occasion and the school actually closed at noon on that day, due to potential violence, as it was known that the funeral of a former gang member was taking place during the afternoon. Extreme forms of violence that occur in Rosemary Gardens regularly impact on the school, its students and educators, leading one educator to say that:

*We are always trying to remedy the mindset of the learner. But sometimes it's understandable. One incident for example, a learner brought a kitchen knife to school and when I asked him why did you bring the knife to school, he says sir I must bring this knife to school, because I have to travel across the territories of three different gangs and I must protect myself. So sometimes you understand why the learner is doing these things, even if it is a kind of a skewed way of protecting himself. What would you do, I am a small boy...?*

Learners travel through the community en route to school and they must return home from school through territories often deemed to be unsafe. The school, home and community places are therefore linked in the daily movements of learners. Students' mobility through these places means that educators are regularly confronted with the realities of life in Rosemary Gardens. The overflow of neighbourhood violence onto the school results in teachers often feeling unsafe, as well their being expected, or choosing to perform roles unimaginable to educators in more middle-class contexts, in addition to curriculum delivery:

*I was 22 years old when I began teaching at RGHS. There was no fence around the school at that time and the gangs would come and the back of the school was their battlefield. But I base everything I do on love, you can't achieve anything without it. I was brought up not to discriminate and judge people. One day a gang came to sort out one of learners and they were armed. I went to face the leader. I taught that boy. I took him by the hand and felt up his arm.... a machete and two guns... and I told him don't do this. Your mommy loves you and doesn't want to come and get your body here. I walked him away to the gate and the gang followed. When I taught him I didn't treat him differently to you or anyone else. But I don't do home visits anymore, it's too dangerous. A boy wanted to stab me once. He wrote ugly stuff on the board and I went to him and wanted to slap him and he took a scissors and wanted to stab me. And about a few weeks later they found that boy's body burnt in the bushes. I went to his parents place...it was abject poverty. The mother pulled me in cause the bullets were just flying. And then I didn't visit homes anymore. Just about every single problem starts in the home.*

At RGHS teachers play the roles of parent, social worker and psychologist, adding to their core work delivering the curriculum. These roles often lead to situations in which educators feel unsafe and threatened, both by learners and others who enter the school space. Despite educators' attempts to remain unprejudiced towards learners, teachers experience acute social class and education level differences between themselves and Rosemary Gardens residents. Educators are aware of the living conditions of most of their students, leading to scepticism in terms of what teachers believe is possible for these

young people to learn and what their futures may hold.

In the extract above the educator uses the word love twice, as she tries to impress upon the young man that his mother values him. bell hooks (2003), states that:

love in the classroom prepares teachers and learners to open our hearts and minds. It is the foundation on which every learning community can be created ... When as teachers we teach with love, combining care, commitment, knowledge, responsibility, respect, and trust, we are often able to enter the classroom and go straight to the heart of the matter ... the most powerful experience we can offer learners is the opportunity to be fully and compassionately engaged with learning. (hooks, 2003: 27)

At RGHS teachers' 'love' for students was often wholly consumed by efforts to ensure students' and others' immediate physical and emotional safety, meaning that pedagogical 'love' was of secondary importance. For these educators their love manifested through quelling threats to learners' material well-being, which often prevented them from "going straight to the heart of the matter" of teaching. At times, pedagogical activities played a more substantially peripheral role, as educators were forced to deal with issues related to physical safety. Attempts to ensure learner safety and also deliver the curriculum affect educators negatively. A recent piece of research that sampled 63 educators at four schools on the Cape Flats found that in excess of 65% of the teachers studied were suffering from high levels of stress and burnout (Johnson, 2013). Some of the reasons cited for these worrying levels of anxiety and fatigue were role uncertainty, being overworked and the tedious bureaucratic processes to which officials subject educators (Johnson, 2013). The descriptions of home visits conducted by RGHS teachers, in the midst of gunfire and the ashes of learners' bodies being found in the surrounds of this neighbourhood, illuminate the kinds of issues that these teachers are forced to confront. These experiences shape what teachers believe is possible in terms of educating the young people that enter their classrooms. Other RGHS educators reinforced this notion of not feeling safe at school:



*Most of the time I don't feel safe at the school, physically and psychologically. Last week I was sitting in the computer lab alone. And a group of gangsters was sitting on the other side of the tarmac. They were smoking dagga (marijuana). A group of young men not from the school came onto the school during the DCAS programme. They were shouting remarks at me, some were ex-learners. I thought what if they come in and close the door. So I said something in the staff room the next day.*

Educators regularly feeling unsafe led to their extensive attempts to maintain some semblance of control and to instil 'discipline' in the learners that they feel they can still make an impact upon. The utterances of educators at Rosemary Gardens High School and the kinds of dialogic learning interactions which I observed therefore need to be interpreted in relation to the Real and Imagined spatial forces in which these utterances "live and take shape" (Bakhtin, 1981: 272). Dealing with gangsterism, school discontinuation, substance abuse and violence form part of daily life for educators, despite measures being taken to segregate the school from the community in which it is located. These social challenges had a substantial impact on educators' utterances and the emergence of dialogic learning, or lack thereof, at RGHS.

Notwithstanding these contextual difficulties related to Real space in Rosemary Gardens, in the past five years attempts have been made to upgrade the school infrastructure, with the support of the Rosemary Gardens Development Trust that was established by May Hughes. R750 000 was spent on building the school rugby/soccer field, a library was established with the support of the NGO Equal Education, a new computer laboratory was constructed and Virgin Active sponsored the first South African school-community gym. In addition, approximately ten local young people are employed by the provincial Department of Cultural Affairs and Sports to facilitate sporting, music, dance and academic activities during the afternoons. These changing Real spatial practices have led to some positive attitudes towards the school:

*Rosemary Gardens is one of the most awesome schools. They have a lot of activities for the youngsters to do.*



Member of the Doodvenootskap

(Translated from the Afrikaans)

And:

*My principal Mr Williams... we're like the young Williams', he's making changes at the school...like in the toilets. I'm starting to feel proud of my school, I feel good in myself yooo I went to this school. That's why I say he's my role-model, he believes in me...like in the week they come and open up a gym in the week for the youth, supply us with gym equipment, so youth can exercise, play soccer. They got activities after school so they don't gotta worry about the guns and stuff... I don't think your principal is on the same point as mine. Mine is tough... Rosemary Gardens is a tough place to be a principal, you have to have a big brain. Gangs have ideas in their minds and he actually talks to them and changes them.*

(Rosemary Gardens learner at Youth Amplified)

Students and others appreciate the activities and infrastructural developments that have been provided for learners and these are understood as aiding in preventing young people from being exposed to the violence that occurs in Rosemary Gardens. The comment above demonstrates respect for Mr Williams and the fact that some students perceive him as a role-model, a man who displays intelligence and courage, confronting social problems that affect the school and neighbourhood. The learner also acknowledges the difficult circumstances that the school experiences, due to its proximity to the Rosemary Gardens community, an area that is plagued by violence, poverty and gang affiliation. These comments demonstrate pride in RGHS, illustrating that some community members' perceptions of the school are becoming increasingly more positive.

Infrastructural developments at RGHS have therefore not gone unnoticed by learners and others and it will require more time in order to assess the affect that

these new activities and facilities have on students' experiences in the school place. However, it is likely that the deep-rooted social problems that exist in the wider Rosemary Gardens community, linked to the history of this area, will continue to impact on educators, students and learning at this school.

Rosemary Gardens is a neighbourhood constructed by apartheid social engineering that physically segregated race groups in the early 1970s and placed people deemed to be inferior in overcrowded, undesirable areas, with few services. Forty years later, Cape Town is one of the most unequal cities in the world and many social problems are experienced in areas like Rosemary Gardens, due to this history and continued inequality. These social problems, such as violence, gangsterism, substance abuse and a lack of food and clothing 'travel' with students as they enter, engage and attempt to learn in the Rosemary Gardens High School place. While educators understand this history and its effects, they regularly do not feel safe and they believe that differences exist between themselves and learners, discrepancies that they often interpret with associated value judgements. Teachers approach this stressful environment, a place in which the education department simply expects them to conduct teaching and learning, by attempting to regain control, through certain disciplinary practices. These Real spatial forces, and associated educator attitudes and practices, function to inhibit dialogic learning.

### **"More than words": Imagined space and language use at Rosemary Gardens High School**

#### **"Learners come with a cultural deficiency": educators' attitudes towards the language of learners**

In addition to efforts to fortify the school from the effects of violence and poverty in the Rosemary Gardens neighbourhood, educators also attempted to insulate RGHS from some of the linguistic and cultural practices associated with

Rosemary Gardens' residents. The negative perception educators held of learners' linguistic resources hampered learning at RGHS:

*The biggest problem is that learners come with a cultural deficiency...no books at home. The only proper English or Afrikaans they hear is from the teachers. Their oral tradition is good, but we need to get them studying and reading. It's the basis of the education. Once they have good command of the language, they can be fine.*

The 'class-culture gap' between working-class students' homes, and the institutional culture of the school, is clearly demonstrated in this quotation. It is implied that the language that students are exposed to in the home and community and which they 'bring' to school, is 'improper', meaning that it is inauthentic and inferior. While a good deal of the logic contained in this educator's sentiment is valid, for example that young people may prosper by having access to books and that reading, studying and gaining a good command of language can be highly beneficial to their academic development, this does not mean that the language learners acquire at home is of a poor quality. This educator implies that young people from Rosemary Gardens are deficient in linguistic capital or that the linguistic capital they possess is of little value for learning in the school space.

Contrary to this attitude regarding the forms of language that students learn at home, Stubbs (2002) argues that the concept of linguistic inadequacy, with regard to a particular language, is a misnomer. A language is not innately superior or inferior to another language. Rather it is used in different context-specific ways at, for example, school, home, church or on the sports field (Stubbs, 2002). Children arrive at school with a wide variety of culturally formulated linguistic experiences that represent differences in cultural practices, not inherent deficiencies (Purcell-Gates, 2002). The appropriate social conventions pertaining to linguistic usage at school are often unknown to working-class youth. Vocabulary that is generally used in this place may be unfamiliar to them, as the linguistic cultural norms associated with schooling more closely resemble the language that is used in middle-class homes (Bernstein, 1964; Stubbs, 2002). The home and school

places therefore contain a different set of linguistic practices and cultural norms, leading some theorists to argue that the gaps between these contexts need to be made explicit and bridged (Lee, 2007). These differences between linguistic practices at home and school do not necessarily imply deficiency, but at RGHS these kinds of discrepancies were usually interpreted in this manner.

Once again culture-class differences between homes/communities and the school place were sometimes expressed as differences in forms of morality. One educator said:

*You can see by their accents that maybe my values and theirs doesn't merge because of their backgrounds.*

This teacher prejudicially states that the different accents with which teachers and learners speak are associated with different values and hence, moral and ethical practices. These differences are presumed to be the result of educators and learners being reared and living in different home and neighbourhood environments, with contrasting socialisation processes. Some educators therefore interpreted their own and learners' class-based linguistic habituses as contingent to different moral and value systems. Linguistic differences between working-class learners and middle-class educators led to assumptions regarding the moral conduct of learners.

Differences in social-class, language, ethics and assumed academic abilities had implications for the kind of education and learning that teachers felt was appropriate for students from Rosemary Gardens. There was an overriding attitude that 'our learners are not capable of succeeding academically', a belief that was substantially informed by the language displayed by learners. This belief led educators to conclude that RGHS students 'are more suited to vocational education'. The general attitude displayed amongst educators was that:

*This school should have a curriculum where some learners are taught to be plumbers, electricians, carpenters. That is one reason for the dropout rate. What*

*school presents is not what the learner requires. Those are all careers where learners make a living. Why must we flog a dead horse?*

Educators believed that the learners that attend RGHS require a different form of education, an attitude that was substantially informed by educators' perceptions of students' linguistic resources and the academic inadequacies that teachers associated with learners' use of language. The content of the curriculum is therefore deemed to be inappropriate for 'these learners', and is pinpointed as one of the main causes of the school's poor academic results. The hiatus between the resources that learners have at their disposal, such as their linguistic capital, and the institutional culture of the school, is not named as a factor contributing to students' struggles with regard to their academic work. The continued practice of corporal punishment is metaphorically referenced in "flogging a dead horse". The comparison between learners and an animal like a horse is derogatory to the intellectual potential of students.

Contrary to the educator quoted above proposing that the solution to learners' academic struggles is 'dumbing down' the curriculum, Ladson-Billings (2002) states that educators' genuine belief in their students' academic abilities is vital for student success. She names this as the first component of a three-pronged theory of a culturally relevant pedagogy. The other two components include educators supporting students' cultural competence vis-a-vis the school and promoting socio-political consciousness in learners, such that they are aware of the manner in which power operates in educational settings (Ladson-Billings, 2002). However, educators at RGHS believed that rather than demanding academic excellence, changing the content of the curriculum would be more beneficial for these learners. There was an assumption amongst educators that vocational education does not contain rigorous academic components. Some RGHS educators therefore believed that regardless of their efforts in the classroom, the current curriculum would not enable these young people to succeed academically. By contrast, Ladson-Billings (2002) argues that educators of working-class children and children of colour need to demand academic excellence and effort from their students, as holding students to these standards is key to their academic success. This does not mean that educators at RGHS

simply need to 'change their attitudes'. As demonstrated, the Real spatial forces related to the school and community make teaching and learning extremely difficult, factors that simultaneously need to be addressed.

Some educators did indeed acknowledge the academic abilities of these learners and understood links between the school and home/community spaces:

*A: Why do learners leave school?*

*R: It's because of the family unit. It has nothing to do with the learner not being academically capable. Some of the brightest learners that get A's drop out. One of my brightest learners was sexually abused when she was 2 years old, by her stepfather. She went to drugs and tik and couldn't deal with it. She planned to kill him. Her mom said she's talking nonsense. I'd say that 80-90% of dropouts are caused by a dysfunctional home.*

While educators at RGHS often dismissed the linguistic capital of students, these sentiments were not displayed by all of the educators. Educators' attitudes also need to be interpreted in the context of the dire social problems plaguing the Rosemary Gardens community. These overwhelming challenges limit what teachers believe is realistically possible for themselves in their role as educators and for these young people in terms of their learning and academic careers.

#### "Hoe (high) Afrikaans": learners' attitudes towards language use at school

Learners and teachers mutually reinforced each other, in terms of their attitudes to learners' use of language. Educators' opinions that learners bring sub-standard linguistic capital into the school space were underlined by learners' sentiments regarding the medium of instruction used at RGHS. Learners' Imagined representations of the school place were dominated by their perceptions that the language used in the curriculum delivery processes was 'on a higher level/standard', in comparison to communication practices that learners utilise outside of the school:

*It's a high standard of words that they use and we've got to get the terms right. Usually the teacher says to us... they will give it just so to us, but then they will try to make it easier for us. They give it just so and then they explain.*

(Translated from the Afrikaans)

and

*The words are very high this year. We never hear those kinds of words. Everything we get is in Afrikaans but it's high Afrikaans. Not the Afrikaans that we speak. It's a higher level. And that's the Afrikaans that they train us in. It's the Afrikaans that we ought to speak but it's not the Afrikaans that we speak.*

(Translated from the Afrikaans)

School is Imagined to be a place where it is appropriate to speak and learn only in high, formal Afrikaans and it is interpreted as the fault of the learners if they are unable to converse in this version of the language. One learner above states that "it's the Afrikaans that we ought to speak", meaning that it is taken for granted that the use of 'high Afrikaans' is legitimate as a medium of instruction at RGHS. The Imagined place of the schools is therefore conceived as 'high up' in comparison to learners, who are, spatially, implied and Imagined to be 'low down'.

Students understand the medium of instruction used at school as a centripetal force from above and yet its legitimacy at school generally remained unchallenged by learners who endure in the school system. These learners who continue to attend the school believe that if one wishes to 'play the school game' then it is necessary to 'raise' one's linguistic standards. The language that learners speak at home and in the Rosemary Gardens community is therefore perceived as inappropriate for use in the school space. In this context educators are described as acting as intermediaries, people who make the terms and the curriculum easier for these young people, inculcating them with a different

linguistic repertoire and 'dumbing down' difficult academic work. The students described an example of 'high' Afrikaans in the following manner:

*A: Can you give me an example of 'high' Afrikaans?*

*F: We are going to show Adam the high terms that they use in Afrikaans... Go to those sicknesses in consumer studies (she is instructing her friend to look in the textbook).*

*G: (Reading) Diabetes, what is diabetes?... (inaudible)... insulin is a hormone produced in the pancreas and is essential to help the body to use digested food for growth and energy.*

*F: Now that's the answer okay Adam, now comes the question, "what is diabetes?" Now why can't they ask it in an easier way?*

*G: You can't (lots of laugh)*

(Translated from the Afrikaans)

The example of diabetes, the definition for which is proclaimed to be irreducible to simpler language, is an example of an authoritative discourse that needs to be 'wholly accepted or rejected' (Bakhtin, 1981). Learners stated that it is impossible to explain this concept in a way that makes sense in the language that they use outside of the school and, in turn, for them to 'double-voice' these terms in their own words. These learners therefore accept this authoritative discourse and some pedagogical methods that inhibit dialogue, such as this example from the consumer studies curriculum. They are resigned to the fact that learning at school means memorising certain facts, in a particular linguistic code, as they attempt to 'raise themselves up' to the level of the school.

Despite learners feeling that their mother-tongue language is 'lower' than the Afrikaans that is sanctioned by the school, linguists theorise that the notion of 'primitive' or inferior forms of language is a myth. Stubbs (2002) explains that languages should not be appraised in terms of their 'sophistication', rather they should be understood to serve the communities that utilise them. In other words, the use of language relates to norms and conventions that are socially



constructed, context specific and linked to their usage in everyday life (Stubbs, 2002). However, schools as institutions have traditionally been very sensitive to deviations from standardised forms of language. RGHS' endorsement of standardised Afrikaans functions to denigrate forms of Afrikaans used by learners outside of the school, resulting in many students at the school feeling linguistically inadequate. This state of affairs echoes Bourdieu & Passerson's (1977: 5) damning claim that "all pedagogic action (PA) is, objectively, symbolic violence insofar as it is the imposition of a cultural arbitrary by an arbitrary power."

In my questioning around the play *Krismis met Map Jacobs*, a text that all of the learners I interviewed enjoyed and which was written in Kaapse Afrikaans, some complex opinions emerged regarding the use of informal Afrikaans in the school place. A focus group led to the following exchange:

*P: In Christmas [with Map Jacobs] they speak like us. I can relate to them.*

*A: Is it important to read books like that?*

*P: Yes, Yes. In a way yes and in a way no. That Afrikaans isn't right. It's not at the standard that it must be.*

*A: but isn't there a place for Kaapse Afrikaans?*

*P: No*

*A: Why not?*

*P: Because you can't write in Cape Afrikaans in your [examination] question paper. The terms must be right.*

*A: Why? I know that's how it is but why must it be that way?*

*T: If it's about Map Jacobs I think it's alright because the book is written like that. But if we look at the other subjects. Like Vatmaar (The novel "A place called Vatmaar") and so on. It's here and there maybe alright. Here and there is alright. But you can't mix your language. If somebody says to me ....then I say "no it's cool I'm going to chill in the sun". We can't speak like that. Your marks go down immediately. They will penalise you [repeats in English], they will penalise you. (Translated from the Afrikaans)*

Young people at RGHS explained that it is a penalisable offence to use the language that they speak at home and in their community, when writing answers during their school examinations. These students learn to use different forms of Afrikaans in specific places, such as the school, home and community, stating that the Afrikaans that they speak at home is of a lower standard and it 'isn't right'. The statement that the "terms must be right" indicates that there is something wrong with speaking Kaapse Afrikaans in the school context. These students who remain in the school system therefore learn how to maximise their points or 'score' through using context-specific linguistic codes. This 'game' includes accepting certain ideologies that are attached to the Imagined space that operates in relation to the school, ideologies that prescribe how language should be used in the school place. RGHS therefore demonstrates how students' utterances are either repressed through silencing or school discontinuation, or they are coerced through language as a socio-ideological system. The kinds of utterances that students are required to produce in the school place are not underpinned by being encouraged to question, engage with ideas or participate in dialogue, rather learners are taught, primarily, to read, write and speak in a particular variety of Afrikaans.

This ideological system, disseminated through language, links to social categories of race and class. There are connotations of 'purity' associated with 'high Afrikaans', the 'appropriate' language of instruction, whilst it is insinuated that Kaapse Afrikaans comprises a 'bastardised' mixture of formal and informal Afrikaans and English. The learner above says that "you can't mix your language". The racial connotations of 'Colouredness' as a 'mixing of races' and being associated with impure forms of language, again comes to mind in reading this quotation.

These participants were matrices who have displayed resilient determination to endure in the high school system for five years. It is therefore likely that they have had to accept these societal and linguistic hierarchies, as they attempt to endure through the school system and benefit therefrom. This state of affairs mirrors Joorst's (2013) documentation of resilient young people in a working-class, rural South African context, young people who fashion what he calls a 'schooled

habitus' in confronting the difficult circumstances of their school and residential communities. In general, therefore, the school place, and the pedagogical practices that occur in it, were perceived by RGHS learners as containing language and knowledge that originates from a 'higher' place than similar practices that operate in their home and community settings. Some learners were suspicious of this state of affairs and others merely accepted it, learning to play the school game 'from the back of the field' (Mills & Gale, 2010).

While many learners interpreted this hierarchy of language and culture as legitimate, a number of them believed in a form of conspiracy, whereby the curriculum and its evaluation are interpreted as attempts to expose RGHS students as ignorant:

*D: They use big words. Things that a person never heard before. We do an exercise in class. Furniture. We understand that language. But then the exams come and they ask the question in a different way man. You don't know. The work looks familiar, but you think "what are these people talking about?" You feel as if they are speaking in another language to you.*

*A: And why do they do that?*

*D: They want to catch you out man. They want to see if you're on that level man. How good is your Afrikaans, how good is your knowledge of consumers [consumer studies]*

(Translated from the Afrikaans)

Some learners interpret the class-culture-linguistic gap as part of an oppressive system that includes forms of evaluation that attempt to expose learners, by demonstrating that they exist, spatially, on a 'lower level', due to the language that they use differing from the language that is used in the education system. Examination questions are supposedly construed in order to deceive these students and are not interpreted, by some learners, as testing whether concepts have been understood. This distrust of the school system is reminiscent of Willis's (1977) 'lads' in *Learning to Labour*, who (correctly) suspected a form of class-based conspiracy militating against their academic achievements. Schooling and

the use of language in the school place are therefore imagined, by learners, as functioning to 'keep these learners down'.

An integral component of learners' scepticism towards formal education is the fact that personnel within the school system disregard these learners' mother-tongue language as sub-standard and inappropriate for use in this place, as evidenced by attitudes of educators. Upon entering formal educational settings some people experience their first institutional encounters with language value judgements that deem their verbal utterances as correct or incorrect, with associated connotations for the speaker's presumed intelligence, family background and future potential (Delpit, 2002). Denigrating the language learners speak at home implicitly insults students' families and other people close to them, as this is the language that they are likely to use in interactions with these people. Learners are aware of these educator sentiments and teachers openly express these opinions in the classroom. Such value judgements lead to learners becoming highly suspicious of a system that belittles their most intimate identities and insinuates what their futures are likely to entail.

For some students, suspicion extended beyond the school itself, to the place of the school within a broader set of societal apparatuses, underlined by the following comment in response to the question "have things changed in the new South Africa?" The learner who answered felt that change has not occurred because:

*They say which clothes to wear, what food to eat, they control you like a puppet. It's like religion, the same person that made religion is the person that set up the government, it's all the same people. Corrupt. They socialise you. Like here by us the gangsterism...but if you look out of the box there are other things that are going on. That's why they control our minds from grade R, they mould us to be workers for them. Like at the schools, the 'Coloured' schools, big windows on this side, the cold side, now we look, this is our lives. It's the way society is programmed.*

(Translated from the Afrikaans)

For this learner, school is perceived as one component of a social system that dictates young people's everyday practices, such as the clothes they wear and the food they eat, as well as moulding their developing consciousness in order to determine the societal division of labour and reproduce wider power dynamics. It is clear, from these sentiments, that the school is not perceived as an empowering institution for these working-class youth. On a number of occasions at Youth Amplified, RGHS learners made reference to the *Illuminati*, a nefarious power conglomerate apparently controlling the world through financial and political transactions and systems. A number of learners also mentioned the film *The Matrix* (as we will see later) as a meaningful text in their lives. The plot of this film revolves around a simulated reality in which people are unaware that their lives are being controlled by machines. The conspiracy theory of the *Illuminati* and learners' interest in *The Matrix*, resonate with the sentiments portrayed in the excerpt above, illustrating the worldviews of many of these students. This worldview is informed by high levels of suspicion, disempowerment and a sense that wider structures are systematically working against their success.

Learners at RGHS therefore displayed three different responses to educators and the school denigrating their forms of language. The first response entailed learners discontinuing their schooling, the second comprised of learners accepting the linguistic market as it appeared at RGHS and attempting to learn standard Afrikaans and the third response involved learners remaining at school, but becoming vocally sceptical of 'the system'. To expand on these three responses, the first results in foreclosing the possibility of dialogue, as the vast majority of RGHS learners discontinue their schooling by grade 12, with the initial exodus starting in grade 10. The difficult neighbourhood conditions and learners' linguistic capital being dismissed as below-par by educators, amongst other reasons, results in many learners discontinuing their schooling. There is little doubt that the messages that the school communicates to students regarding their use of language, one of the most intimate aspects of their identities, contribute to the high rates of discontinuation observed at this school.

A second, smaller group of RGHS learners accept this linguistic, cultural and

class-based hierarchy, committing themselves to working towards acquiring the linguistic capital that the school offers for consumption. These learners' acceptance of the inferiority of their language, as they choose to work towards obtaining a new linguistic code, may have detrimental effects. Fine's (1991) research indicated that 'successful' low-income students who remained at school were more depressed, conformed to a greater extent and were less politically aware of poverty and racism than young people who discontinued their schooling.

The third response comprised of learners remaining at school, like the second group, however, instead of agreeing that their linguistic resources were of a lower 'standard', these young people expressed extreme distrust in the system. The conspiracy theories developed by a small handful of learners that remained at school therefore demonstrated a form of resistance. A number of Rosemary Gardens' youth told me that they believed in the Illuminati, a group apparently orchestrating global affairs for nefarious ends, the film the Matrix resonated strongly with these young people and some youth described how society is programmed to exploit people from Rosemary Gardens. These examples demonstrate that Rosemary Gardens youth are aware of the ways in which society stacks the odds of success against them, the denigration of their use of language being only one example of this phenomenon. Although many of these young people are 'born frees', youth who were born in the democratic era, their lives continue to be dominated by inequalities related to South Africa's past.

The appeal of these forms of conspiracy theory indicate that these young people desire a pedagogy that develops their political consciousness and directly engages with issues related to social justice (Duncan Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Freire, 1970; Ladson-Billings, 1995). Rosemary Gardens youth do not need to be made aware of- or 'conscientised'- with regard to their oppression, they are already cognisant of the social hierarchy. They require new tools for interpreting the conditions in which they live, concepts and language that empower them to name these circumstances, to speak truth, as it were, to power.

I would say that each of these 'responses' to the conditions experienced at RGHS constitute a form of Lived space, in accordance with the manner in which I

defined this term in chapter one. These responses from youth consist of their negotiating the effects of Real and Imagined spatial forces that shape their lives, as they find ways of 'living' in the interstices of these structural conditions. However, some of these forms of Lived space may not be empowering, such as school discontinuation, as these young people's future options are severely limited by not completing secondary school. Similarly, accepting that one's mother-tongue language is 'inferior', in the interests of acquiring linguistic capital, to be used in future endeavours, is not an empowering process. While Lived space may involve individuals exerting agency, actions such as leaving school or accepting inferiority do not necessarily enable or empower young people.

Learner perceptions of RGHS, and the educational practices that take place therein, therefore consistently contained references to the language that they are expected to use in this place, language that was perceived to be of a higher standard compared to the language which they use at home and in the neighbourhood in which they live. The ideological forces related to language, operating in this place, therefore displayed strong centrifugal tendencies, as official, elite forms of language functioned to create a fixed order, demarcating the boundaries between legitimate and illegitimate language forms (Gardiner, 1992). Some learners accepted these linguistic norms as legitimate and worked hard at their personal academic development, attempting to elevate themselves in social status. Others expressed suspicion at expectations surrounding the use of language. These suspicions were directed at the school and broader education system more generally, structures that are believed to be working to expose these young people. The large numbers of learners who discontinue their schooling also demonstrates a sense of distrust or alienation experienced by Rosemary Gardens youth, in relation to the education system. Accepting these norms or discontinuing their schooling does not catalyse forms of dialogic learning. For those students who do develop a form of critical consciousness, demonstrated through their suspicions that they are being conspired against, neither the curriculum nor educators stimulate these learners growing socio-political consciousness.

### **“Jy dink jou kak stink nie” (you think your shit doesn’t stink): dialogue in the classroom**

Extensive and ubiquitous violence seeping into RGHS from the Rosemary Gardens neighbourhood, coupled with educators’ beliefs that learners are more suited to vocational education and students’ reticence that their language is inadequate, all led to restricted dialogue and learning in RGHS classrooms. However, what is most poignant as an initial ‘finding’ is the fact that much dialogue never happens because the vast majority of learners discontinue their schooling by grade 12, with the first exodus starting in grade 10. The difficult neighbourhood conditions and learners’ linguistic capital being dismissed as below-par by educators, amongst other reasons, results in an emphatic ‘silence’ as learners increasingly do not return to school.

I would like to emphasise that, although my findings have shown that educators were dismissive of learners’ use of language and these young people’s cultural practices, I did observe many instances of care for learners and attempts by educators to relate to the cultural worlds of students. To substantiate, I observed 16 educators teaching in their classrooms, 10 females and six males. Of the 10 female teachers whose classes I observed, half of these educators told their classes that they “love them”. This demonstrated a remarkable level of open affection towards learners and an attempt to create an emotional bond between themselves and the students. On the other hand, this ‘parental’ or pastoral relationship does not necessarily promote high intellectual expectations and a belief in learners’ ability to succeed academically (Watson, 2011). It may even function in a somewhat patronising manner, as these learners are perceived to be vulnerable, working-class children needing to be saved and protected. This culture of care also contained a religious element, with prayer forming a regular part of classroom conduct. On one occasion I was sniffing in the classroom and the entire class was instructed to “pray for Adam to get well”, demonstrating to the visitor that these young people were being socialised ‘properly’.

Educators expressed their affinity for learners through the ways in which they pronounced words, when conversing with students. For example, I counted that 7



out of the 10 female educators pronounced the word 'jy' (you) like the English letter 'j' or 'djy' and not in the more formal Afrikaans pronunciation, similar to an English exclamation of happiness: 'yay'. This is a typically Kaapse Afrikaans or working-class pronunciation of the word and I noticed some educators pronouncing 'jy' differently when talking to students in comparison to when they were conversing with one another.

A number of the educators furthered these endeavours to connect with the life worlds and cultural contexts in which learners live outside of the school walls, through the use of humour and by making links between academic content and learners' everyday lives. For example, one physical science teacher told her class that their mothers use calcium carbonate or bicarbonate of soda to make 'koeksisters', a popular sweet delicacy on the Cape Flats. The same teacher made a number of connections to learners' lives during the compulsory reading period that took place for half an hour at the start of each day. She had instructed students to borrow a book from the library, to be brought to class and read during the designated reading period. She complained about the fact that only a handful of students had actually complied with this instruction and then handed out a photocopied reading she had prepared. The reading was a piece from the magazine *Vrouekeur* entitled 'Teesakkie se Moses' (roughly translated as 'Teabag go to hell')(see appendix G), a satirical piece about tea-party etiquette involving three people. In the article one guest at the teaparty was trying to fit into high society, one was completely unconcerned with social norms and the final character was a member of the elite social strata. Ms Anderson read the article to the class and tried to make it relevant to the students, explaining the ironies and 'translating' statements such as 'jy dink jou sweet stink nie' (you think your sweat doesn't stink) to 'jy dink jou kak stink nie' (you think your shit doesn't stink). She said this phrase meant that 'jy hou jou kwaai' (you think you're cool). She explained an incident from the article regarding the host leaving the teabag inside of the cup, allowing a guest to remove it herself and said "we just chuck it out, throw it onto your mom's garden... it's good for compost".

Mrs Anderson's used a swear word ('kak' or 'shit') and a slang term ('kwaai' or 'cool'), attempting to break some of the usual school conventions and taboos in

order to make schooling a comfortable, relevant experience for these young people. She said 'we' would throw the teabag out, illustrating an attempt to decrease social divisions of class and education between herself and the learners. She also made this interaction educational, transcending school subjects with the example of the teabag being used for compost, an utterance that was provided during the reading period. This reading period demonstrated the lengths that some educators took to use their lessons both to connect with learners' worlds and to expose them to some practices that would only occur outside of Rosemary Gardens, such as the etiquette of a middle-class tea party. These actions were carried out with love and care. However throughout this reading period the educator did the vast majority of the talking; she directed the lesson, asked the questions and did all of the reading.

Similarly, during the teaching of the poem *Memento* by W.D. Snodgrass, Mr Williams, the principal, made a number of humorous remarks. For example, he linked the term "severed" hand to violence in the Rosemary Gardens community and explained the term "ambivalent" by encouraging learners to tell their mothers that "their feelings for her are ambivalent". He suggested that on a Monday night, when Spur restaurants offer a popular 'two hamburgers for the price of one' special offer, students should share that their feelings for their lover "are ambivalent". He made fun of the poet's surname, making a mock telephone call and saying "hello it's Mr Snodgrass here, I'd like two samosas and a pie".

These forms of humour were enjoyed by the learners and relaxed the atmosphere in the classroom, something which learners said they desired in the school setting. However the lesson and the humour it contained were initiated and conducted almost exclusively by the educator himself. They did not provide the learners with opportunities to initiate interactions, ask questions or express their ideas.

These instances in which humour was used, and efforts were made to relate to the life worlds of learners were not the dominant form of interaction, but they were certainly present and demonstrated the care that some educators at RGHS took to connect with the life worlds of learners. However, these kinds of classroom

interactions are still iterations of the initiation response feedback (IRF) type teaching style identified to comprise over two-thirds of classroom talk by international research (Flanders, 1970; Howe, 2010). Different degrees and forms of this IRF phenomenon were therefore observed in RGHS classrooms, ranging from the poem and reading period already described, to educators merely performing a prepared script and pausing from time to time for learners to insert a missing word. Pure dictation was also a common occurrence at RGHS, for example:

*Change the following from direct to reported speech. Skip a line and make a bullet point. "Figurative language makes use of comparisons and suggestive ideas". Underline comparisons and suggestive ideas. Who still doesn't understand the difference between literal and figurative language? Put up your hand if you don't understand. Dis niks om nie te weet nie (It's nothing to not know). Please write down, "we use figures of speech to express ourselves, visually, imaginatively and powerfully".*

and:

*I will give you points and then you write them down. Write in your book: "Grandpa Lewis' funeral. George Lewis received a Roman Catholic funeral. The entire Vatmaar community was there because he was one of the founders. Uncle Tjai prayed and sang the same prayers and songs that were recited every Sunday. Uncle Flip brought the coffin to the graveyard on his cart. He brought it on his horse 'Old Swaai'". A direct quotation indicates to the examiner that you know and your marks go up immediately. Open your quotation marks. "The coffin was good enough for King George. George Lewis was more 'Black' than 'White'. He did more for the 'Black' people than for the 'Whites'". Use these as your key words. Turn forward to your characters. Pieter Bruin was a 'White' man, married to Anna."*

(Translated from the Afrikaans)

This kind of input from educators illustrates the opinion of one of the RGHS learners that attended Youth Amplified, who said that *“the teachers tell us the answers, they tell us what we need to know to pass”*. Although the learner meant this as a positive contribution from teachers, dictation does not aid in students learning for themselves, as they merely regurgitate the words of educators. Dictation produces an authoritative discourse, a single answer that is neither reflected upon nor thought about and does not require that learners develop their own positions (Wegerif, 2007). This pedagogical method ultimately ensures the repression of debate and discussion. However, these actions demonstrate to curriculum advisors, who visit the school, in order to inspect learner workbooks, that the curriculum has been delivered and that time has been dedicated towards completing required tasks. Ensuring that students receive these dictated notes allows educators to prove that if learners do not succeed in their examinations, it is not due to their being inadequately prepared by educators.

Learners did not enjoy classes in which they simply engaged in writing and said that they desired to engage in discussions:

*A: What is a good teacher?*

*N: She makes you want to do the subject. She makes actions, she moves. Not that they're not good, just not exciting.*

*A: And in what subjects would you say you really learn something?*

*N: Tourism with Mrs Pearson. She doesn't write a lot of things on the board. She does verbal communication with us. She talks to us. She says communication is a better way to connect people in the world. If Adam goes to her class you won't see a lot of written work. We just write things down from the board in other classes.*

(Translated from the Afrikaans)

A good teacher is therefore, according to learners, one who is active and requires students to exercise their minds. This position is supported by research in the academic literature (Alexander, 2008; Mercer, 2002). There is also a significant amount of interaction and communication between students and the teacher in

the classroom of the 'good' teacher and it is in these classrooms that learners feel that genuine learning takes place. This student states that in other classes they merely reproduce information written on the chalkboard, a situation in which learners are not required to think or show initiative. There is clearly a need for students to be exposed to and absorb key ideas and base knowledge, to be used in different school subjects. However, this should be combined with interpersonal interactions in which that knowledge is used, explored and questioned by these young people. In order for learning to take place it is vital that students actively engage in thinking and use their minds (Alexander, 2008; Mercer, 2002). However, dialogic learning entails more than cognitive activities, as this form of learning involves "verbal communication", as the learners stated, as one of its core components. Learners therefore endorsed the communication of meaning and working out common or shared perspectives through forms of dialogue (Gadamer, 1975).

Contrary to what learners reported regarding educators' lack of willingness to engage in verbal communication, during my classroom observations I witnessed educators making limited attempts to create dialogue between themselves and the students. Almost all of the educators I observed encouraged learners to ask questions, with little success. When learners did respond to educators' questions, their responses were defended by educators, who often pleaded with the class to respect the inputs of peers and not to ostracise participating students. The reasons for student 'silencing' cannot, therefore, be solely reduced to the efforts and educational approaches of educators.

Students' refusal or reticence to participate in academic activities may be partly due to fears of being exposed, as their academic progress, such as reading ability, may be lagging behind 'benchmarked standards' stipulated by education department officials. There was ample evidence that students were sensitive to being exposed or shamed by teachers. Students stated that 'good teachers' did not embarrass learners in front of their peers:

*A: What makes a good teacher?*

*M: The way they bring the work over. The way they make you understand. The relationship you have with the teacher. Maybe you don't understand the work na, now the way teachers are with you ...maybe you scared to talk with that teacher cause you scared she'll give you an answer that won't be nice. And that happens when you don't even understand the work. Cause you scared that she'll embarrass you in front of the whole class. They like to make you feel bad jong, in front of the whole class jong. You didn't do well in a subject and they throw it in your face, in front of everyone.*

Situations in which students' fear being exposed and embarrassed are not conducive to promoting forms of dialogue, as young people will be unwilling to speak freely if they fear humiliation. This does not only pertain to feeling sufficiently confident in order to contribute answers or opinions in class, but also to feeling sufficiently uninhibited such that students may ask questions when academic work has not been understood.

## **Conclusion**

At RGHS dialogic learning in classrooms was repressed due to the pressure on educators to deliver the curriculum. The master's thesis of the current Rosemary Gardens school principal, Mr Abdullah Williams, entitled "*Towards participatory teaching and learning processes in the English language classroom*" (the abstract of the dissertation is appendix H), demonstrates some of the difficulties contained in implementing alternative forms of pedagogy in the school place, with its rigid curricula requirements. In his master's thesis, Mr Williams provides a pithy summary of the critical pedagogy literature and the political and ideological nature of schooling. He reflected deeply on his teaching practice and the ways in which he has contributed to forms of oppression. He then described two of his attempts to conduct action research projects that experimented with participatory, student led forms of pedagogy. The first project utilised group work to foster cooperative learning amongst students in a second language English classroom. The second project comprised the teaching of the novel *The Winslow Boy*. The plot of this text

revolves around a naval college student who is expelled for supposedly stealing from a peer and then delves into the ensuing court case. Mr Williams led an outing to a magistrate's court and organised a film viewing of an adaptation of the text for the learners to observe. These projects demonstrated a deep commitment to his profession, as well as creativity and rigorous forms of analytical engagement with the subject that he teaches. His project also displays admirable forms of political consciousness and critical thinking. However, neither of these projects tapped into the cultural or linguistic resources of the learners, as they failed to unearth students' everyday practices or capitals. Mr Williams ultimately required that the learners in his study conform to certain curricula requirements.

In addition to the pressures of the structured curriculum, the Real spatial forces operating in the neighbourhood of Rosemary Gardens, such as poverty and violence, combined with beliefs regarding the linguistic capital of learners, led to restricted dialogue and learning, as RGHS educators fought for some semblance of classroom control. At RGHS students learn that the language they speak outside of the school place is inferior to the language that they are expected to use at school. Many Rosemary Gardens learners reject this state of affairs and discontinue their schooling. For those that remain, students need to accept the status quo and adapt their practices in order to 'play the school game', forging what Joost (2013) calls a 'schooled habitus'. Some students that remain do so with extreme suspicion and express distrust towards the school and the world in which it operates, believing in a conspiracy that works against their success. Educators reinforced beliefs and attitudes of learners by confirming these social differences, stating that learners' language and by association their values, are inferior and a hindrance to success in the school context. Educators did attempt to connect with the life worlds of learners and make teaching and learning relevant to these young people. However, students were given minimal responsibilities or opportunities to lead in the classroom or to think for themselves. The standardised curriculum and learning outcomes stipulated by the education department mean that educators teach in a highly regulated and prescribed manner, militating against dialogic exchanges.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **DIALOGIC LEARNING AMONGST THE DOODVENOOTSKAP**

*This is real,  
How can you a **nation** heal?  
Everyone wants to be **Superman**  
**But no one wants to fight the battle**  
**Babies lost their toys**  
**Cause their mothers want to rattle,**  
Like chickens in a coop  
Where everybody cackles  
**Decisions** are made without us  
And now I must my bek hou [shut my animalistic mouth]  
**Nowadays** everyone looks up to you  
And you're an **infection**,  
**You were born from a weak reaction***

(Translated from the Afrikaans. English words that were used by the original are in **bold**.)

From the album *Skollyhood Chapter One: reality's face*, by Ssslang, DVS member

*...it (hip-hop) also consists of graffiti and visual arts, dancing and different kinaesthetic movements, deejaying and being musicologically inclined. The fifth element of the culture of hip-hop is knowledge...the formulation and creation of knowledge ...all you have to do is look at what hip-hop culture does in education systems... we encourage young people to use and control language for their benefit, so it's empowering and liberating through the linguistic piece, but all these other elements are also a big part of this conversation. We're talking about a very*



*full, robust culture here that has liberated young people and liberated their minds for almost four decades now.*

Interview with Dr James Peterson

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TydqRM71eYo>

*As is the case for cultural production generally, the politics of rap music involves the contestation over public space, expressive meaning, interpretation, and cultural capital. In short, it is not just what one says, it is where one can say it, how others react to what one says, and whether one has the means with which to command public space.*

Tricia Rose, 1991: 276

### **A youth 'movement' in Rosemary Gardens**

My analysis now moves away from the school RGHS, to the words and actions of the Doodvenootskap (DVS), a crew of young hip-hop artists from Rosemary Gardens. DVS is a group of youth who write their own lyrics, record tracks of music and attempt to raise consciousness with regard to some of the issues that they consider to comprise social problems in their neighbourhood. Three members of DVS are employed by an NGO called the Children's Rights and Anti-Abuse Group (CRAAG). As CRAAG employees they help conduct research with young people in Rosemary Gardens, advocate for the non-violent treatment of children in this neighbourhood, as well as promote young people's participation in decision-making forums at school and in the wider community. The DVS crew consists of approximately six to eight core individuals, however 20 young people are regularly involved in DVS activities and one young person told me that up to 50 individuals are loosely affiliated with the group. Of the core members of the

crew that I interacted with, one is in his early thirties, one is 26 years old and the others are of school going age, although two of the remaining members no longer attend school.

In this chapter I analyse how the dialogic interactions in which DVS engage are shaped by Real, Imagined and Lived socio-spatial relations. I begin by describing how Real spatial forces relate to learning amongst the DVS crew, including the consequences of the Group Areas Act (1950) that racially segregated groups of South Africans and led to the creation of Rosemary Gardens. The establishment of this neighbourhood, through forced removals, and the state's lack of support for residents in the area, resulted in a plethora of social problems, such as violence and gang affiliation. The existence of these kinds of problems led to NGOs aiding the residents of Rosemary Gardens, both during the apartheid and democratic periods. NGO involvement in Rosemary Gardens has resulted in the Doodvenootskap's relationship with CRAAG, a partnership that is beneficial to both parties. Another Real spatial dynamic that shapes DVS' dialogic learning practices, is the fact that apartheid laws and racially segregated neighbourhoods meant that areas like Rosemary Gardens became physically divided into different gang-controlled territories. DVS members describe the group as an intentional, alternative identification for young people, distinct from the gang affiliation that plagues the area. This alternative identity enables access to a range of non-gang related practices, including writing hip-hop lyrics.

These Real socio-spatial relations are therefore intimately linked to the workings of Imagined space, as they relate to DVS, with the group conceiving or imagining itself as a 'youth movement' that comprises an alternative 'education' to what is learnt through gang affiliation. This informal education is acquired through the Imagined space DVS creates, in the form of linguistic resources that these young people leverage and use in their involvement with NGOs and hip-hop culture.

Acquiring concepts and discourses from global and local hip-hop culture, as well as from NGOs, does not mean that dialogic learning has taken place. These youth need to reflect on and interrogate these ideas, not merely accept and use concepts without thinking. In the final section of the chapter I analyse the young

people's use of concepts, language and utterances in discussions between DVS members and myself, as well as by looking at the meaning of the lyrics that the young people write. These spoken and written words illuminate how the group engages in dialogues across the multiple sets of social relations that they traverse.

DVS' utterances and activities constitute a form of contestation vis-a-vis access to public space, producing what Nancy Fraser (1992; 1995) has called a 'subaltern counterpublic'. 'Subaltern counterpublics' are arenas positioned adjacent to the main public sphere, arenas where subordinated groups produce and introduce counter-discourses (Fraser, 1992; 1995; 1996). The public sphere refers to a societal space separate from the state and market economy, in which citizens debate affairs of mutual interest and political involvement manifests through conversations. In the form of this subaltern counterpublic, DVS are able to assert and reinvent forms of language that are denigrated by the wider linguistic market. By first engaging within their own group, subordinated collectivities, like DVS, may therefore agree on mutual interests, needs and standpoints, without the risk of these initially being co-opted and exploited by other, dominant groups, in the process creating forms of 'Lived' space.

### **Real space and the Doodvenootskap**

#### **NGOs establish the community centre**

Understanding how DVS operates as a 'subaltern counterpublic', a place where a particular group can debate issues of mutual interest, requires an initial analysis of the Real and Imagined socio-spatial relations that led to the production of this group. In terms of Real spatial relations, NGOs' resistance to draconian apartheid policies led to a number of these organisations working in Rosemary Gardens, contributing valuable resources and new learning places and practices to this neighbourhood. These activities and assets continue to be of benefit to young people, from this area, in terms of what and how they learn during the democratic period.

Specifically in relation to the Doodvenootskap, the community centre or Global Hope Foundation (GHF) building was erected in the early 1980s, through a partnership between the United Reformed Church from Germany and GHF, with DVS currently conducting most of its work in this place. A number of NGOs rent offices in the building, including CRAAG and this organisation provides DVS with a small office. The office and institutional base contribute to the group's overall professional identity. It also provides DVS with a set of physical resources. Being located in this office enables the group to hold meetings and learn through observing and being part of a plethora of interactions with interns, international donors and local government officials who move through the physical space of the GHF building. This was the place in which I predominantly interacted with the group. The impact that NGOs have had on Real space in Rosemary Gardens, demonstrated by these organisations' attempts to alleviate some of the effects of legislated racial segregation, therefore shape and enable DVS as a learning place.

Apartheid laws create Real spatial dislocation and youth gangs: Doodvenootskap as an alternative to gang affiliation

Real space in Cape Town was disrupted by the Group Areas Act (1950), which dismantled local communities and led to 150 000 people being relocated. This, in turn, led to some of those people who were relocated recreating new forms of social cohesion, through establishing youth gangs or 'brotherhoods' (Pinnock, 1984). The Doodvenootskap, in turn, was formed as an alternative to youth gang affiliation in Rosemary Gardens. A range of different forms of social cohesion has therefore manifested in response to the dislocation caused by apartheid removals. The emergence of DVS is, therefore, indirectly the result of turbulent Real spatial forces in Cape Town. The life story of Hoppie, the founding member of DVS and role-model for the younger DVS participants, illuminates how resistance to harsh Real circumstances has shaped his life trajectory:

*A: How did it happen [that you got involved in gangsterism]?*

*H: It was all my friends, family as well. They were the type of people that I looked up to. You speak about the exact same things. **Gangsters** have everything, clothes, cars. As I became older I realised that's not what makes a person. Before that realisation I moved in that energy. Stabbed people with a knife. Fought with people. I wasn't a gangster but I associated...it gave me street knowledge in terms of how **to communicate with youngsters**. And in the line of work that I'm involved in now, how to communicate with youngsters that are trapped in that same **energy**. I chose not to take a tattoo. For me it wasn't necessary because of my **religious beliefs**. But they said I know too many **secrets**. I was in wrong things. I went to jail also. The second time [I went to jail] I decided it **definitely** wasn't for me. I was at Pollsmoor. A **weekend was** like a month. I had [stabbed] somebody...with a knife. Attempted murder. I worked it all out, I found myself in **hip-hop poetry, acting** and I lay there for a whole **weekend**. I thought I don't want to do that. I got my cards in a line. I booked myself into...not a rehab but with my people. With a **higher power**. I was **religiously involved** at the mosque. I was on my own for a whole month. I got **positive energy**. My **street knowledge** that I had I put it all into my writing. My first song was about things that I often **imagined**. I was in America, courting Jennifer Lopez. The **song's** name was **imagination**. "You sit on the edge and it **corner's** you, the kids sit in the park and play with yo yos." I wrote that song and I was tripping. Tripping in the sense that I believed in myself. "**Collaborate with J Lo, first class flight up to Chicago**. Now I have a CD and it hits on the radio." And so it began and the kids said this guy is awesome, he raps awesome. I wrote my second **song** and the second **song** was more **conscious**.*

(Translated from the Afrikaans. English words that were used by the interviewee are in **bold**.)

Hoppie's development as a musician is forged through constructing an alternative Imagined pathway- his first song is called *Imagination*- to the gang affiliation into which many young men on the Cape Flats are coerced. Forced removals led to Real physical dislocation, with some people recreating forms of social cohesion through re-establishing social networks in newly constructed areas, in the form of

gangs or 'brotherhoods' (Pinnock, 1984). The social relations that were influential in the early part of Hoppie's life, such as ties to family members and friends that had been badly affected by the social problems in the neighbourhood, demonstrate the effects of harsh Real circumstances on young people in Rosemary Gardens. Fortunately for Hoppie his religious background functioned as a support structure, aiding in his transformation from a lifestyle involving violence and narcotics, to his pursuing a different set of activities, goals and dialogues.

Hoppie's resilience to the harsh Real circumstances in which he was reared was further aided by his involvement in different musical and dramatic activities. This began by him being filmed as part of a documentary on recovery from crystal methamphetamine addiction. Award-winning theatre director Lara Foote Newton watched the film and approached Hoppie, asking him to help construct the script for an educational drama production that was taking place at the Baxter Theatre. After completing this project he proceeded to work on another play, *Prison Codes*, with local playwright Luqman Adams. Simultaneously, Hoppie wrote a number of songs that he uploaded onto Youtube. He is therefore a somewhat successful musician, music producer and playwright, a young man whose development has been influenced by dialogic interactions and communication with documentary filmmakers, playwrights and other artists. He serves as a role model and educator for DVS youth, through his pioneering an alternative form of youth identity in Rosemary Gardens. All of the DVS members I interviewed described their initiation into the crew as revolving around an apprenticeship period in which Hoppie worked with them to improve their lyric writing skills.

The group's resistance to gang affiliation, one of the consequences of Real spatial dislocation in Cape Town and their attempts to create an alternative place where young people acquire a different informal education, is demonstrated in the name 'Doodvenootskap'. The name means 'funeral service', or quite literally, 'death partnership', implying that the group functions to 'clean up' the social problems related to gang involvement, as the young people involved proclaim that DVS provides an alternative peer group affiliation for youth:

*It's short for Doodvenootskap. That's the 'note' like the musical note and then the 'skap' for the brotherhood. In this rap game they (rappers) just wanna kill each other. Like I stand for something, that I want to say I would rather collaborate than compete. Want almal in die game wil compete (Because everybody in this game wants to compete). Funeral services ons is hier, ons maak skoon (we are here, we clean up).*

DVS differentiates itself from gangsterism and advocates for collaboration between different community organisations in order to help eradicate or “clean up” what they consider to be prevalent problems in Rosemary Gardens. This is pursued through making music and raising consciousness, in the form of creative lyrics, advocacy work and building social cohesion. As a ‘learning place’ DVS is therefore partly produced in opposition to the consequences of Real, physical spatial dislocation that resulted from apartheid forced removals. The involvement of NGOs in Rosemary Gardens has also led to alternative Real places being built in the area, such as the GHF building, where DVS is able to explore and engage with a different set of educational practices.

### **Imagined space and the Doodvenootskap: ‘a light through the darkness’**

DVS was portrayed as a ‘youth movement’, uniting young people in Rosemary Gardens through a ‘positive’ affiliation and, simultaneously, creating an alternative peer group identity and learning place, with a different set of associated practices, in comparison to gang involvement:

*DVS is a youth movement, we aim to empower youth with the knowledge to be future leaders instead of following. We believe in leading by example, so we taking the stand because there's a lot of poverty and gangsterism and negative stuff surrounding our community. We're making sure there's a light through all this darkness...*

DVS encourage young people to become involved in the activities that they facilitate, hence avoiding some of the social problems associated with the Rosemary Gardens neighbourhood, such as gang affiliation, substance abuse and violence. By attracting a particular age-related cohort of young people rather than to associate with DVS, the members of the group envision constructing an alternative 'place' or youth movement. I was informed that the movement was aimed at youth in Rosemary Gardens and Riverside, areas that were designated for 'Coloured' people under the Group Areas Act and which, more specifically, continue to consist almost exclusively of working-class 'Coloured' people. Geographically, for example, Pelican Park is positioned adjacent to Rosemary Gardens and was also restricted to 'Coloured' residents during apartheid. However, Pelican Park has been excluded from the vision for 'the movement', presumably due to its middle-class status. Practices that are integral to 'the movement' include writing lyrics and engaging with ideas that emerge from their work for CRAAG. DVS is therefore partially produced through these young people creating an Imagined place where certain practices can legitimately occur, some of which are related to dialogic learning.

Social relations between this hip-hop crew and CRAAG, as well as other NGOs, further elucidates DVS as an Imagined place. The young people of DVS are exposed to new concepts through the discursive framework of organisations that exist in close proximity to the group. The language, values and ideology of NGOs that work in the Global Hope Foundation building therefore contribute to how DVS has formed as a 'learning place'. For example, CRAAG staff employ a human rights discourse due to their founding links to a tertiary education institution and engagement with public health circles. Staff of this organisation regularly use the language of 'human rights', with terms like 'empowerment' and 'freedom of speech' punctuating the talk of CRAAG and, in turn, DVS. Dylan Aprils, the young man who works for CRAAG and is closely associated with DVS said:

*People or adults make decisions for children here. This isn't a child-centred community. If this were a child-centred community bra there would be parks, people in schools, camps over weekend, strong families. It's organised chaos here.*



The Real space of Rosemary Gardens is perceived as deficient in terms of facilities for young people and this attitude is tied to a set of discourses and practices that define the neighbourhood as ‘unchild-centred’, a place where adults make decisions for children. Many DVS members are aligned with this position:

*CRAAG is an organisation aimed at children’s rights. CRAAG stands for the children’s rights and anti-abuse group. Like we, I work for them and we focus on empowering youth, the same as DVS. So it’s a combination of DVS and CRAAG. So we trying to fuse this whole thing to get youth off the street and we’re trying to use the resources that CRAAG has, to uplift the youth. We trying to be what our ancestors wanted us to be. They wanted us to be this powerful nation in history. We believe in child participation that’s our main focus, to see our community through the eyes of the children, the next generation, the next leaders.*

The links between CRAAG and DVS are clearly stated in this quotation, with both groups working towards ‘uplifting the youth’, promoting ‘child participation’ and developing ‘youth leadership’. DVS’ work is therefore allied with the operations of CRAAG and the two groups display similar goals and utterances. Young people like Fabio therefore utilise this rights-based discourse in their daily linguistic repertoires, adopting concepts obtained from associations with CRAAG personnel. This discourse then filters down to the younger members of the group that are not employed by CRAAG, in the process creating a form of Imagined space within which DVS operates. Through this discourse the group attempts to resist some of Rosemary Gardens’ social problems that are associated with ‘the street’. Youth are therefore metaphorically taken ‘off the street’ by DVS and CRAAG and led to a safe place, such as the Global Hope Foundation building. Through concepts linked to a human rights discourse, DVS define themselves in opposition to other peer groups, such as those that create their identities on ‘the street’, groups like youth gangs that embody glorified criminal activities.

The human rights discourse propagated by CRAAG, and which is embedded in the South African constitution, provides DVS with a new set of concepts with which to engage, as illustrated by the following quotations:

*I felt that was my responsibility as a elder brother to teach her her rights, cause I was never taught that. I was always taught that whatever an adult say they right, you a child you wrong.*

And:

*I have a poet license, it's freedom of speech and I'm using mine now.*

The young people involved in DVS perceive themselves as endowed with the responsibility to promote children's rights and guide other youth to militate against forms of injustice that are believed to take place in Rosemary Gardens. The group use this rhetoric in their hip-hop work, as their 'poetic licenses' and 'freedom of speech' are practiced through lyric writing, as well as in their advocacy activities for CRAAG, promoting the rights guaranteed to children by the South African constitution. DVS members also utilise this discourse in their personal lives, in interactions with, for example, siblings, as one of the quotations above suggests. The work that DVS conducts with CRAAG therefore results in these youth procuring a new set of concepts and utilising language that promotes individual rights. Merely acquiring this discourse does not, however, necessarily mean that dialogic learning has taken place, as I will show in the next section. It is necessary for these youth to reflect on and question ideas related to a rights-based framework, in order for them to learn from these concepts.

The Imagined space within which DVS members learn is also produced by the concepts the group gleans from global and local hip-hop culture. For example, DVS members often described becoming 'more conscious' through hip-hop, demonstrating their affiliations with international forms of conscious hip-hop that originated in the United States:

*E: The best thing to do when you freestyle is rap a few things that you thought of before and when you run out of ideas, rap what is happening now or rap what you seeing. So if you sitting in this place you can rap over a chair and you can rap*

*over your hair, cause you here and the chair's here. I'm not so good in freestyling, I'm getting better. I like to write lyrics. You have all the time to edit your lyrics and make sure they're more conscious lyrics.*

*A: What you mean more conscious?*

*E: When I'm freestyling and I'm running out of things you can say a lot of stupid things to just keep going with the freestyle, when you writing you have all that time to think and realise okay that doesn't sound right for a two year old. You understand?*

A conscious lyric is one that is reflected upon and thought about, not merely generated instinctively. Freestyling as a cultural practice and form is therefore believed not to be conducive to rappers generating 'conscious' lyrics, as it does not promote reflection and rigorous thinking at the time of production. It is important to DVS that lyrics make sense, are thought about and do not merely involve rhyming and using words gratuitously. These youth are therefore engaging with wider international discourses, practices and values that shape conscious hip-hop, which they rearticulate in the local context and use to learn through the Imagined space of DVS.

However, there was a strong affinity to local cultural forms in DVS' engagement with hip-hop; through dialogic interactions with Hoppie, younger DVS members were able to obtain advice on how to write lyrics and rap, as they were encouraged to embrace forms of local culture and not the commercial, American hip-hop that they see on television:

*I said look here Hoppie "how do you rap?" And he said I must write him a verse and so I wrote him a verse. I don't remember, I wish I had it right here right now to see how much I've changed. The verse was about "I wish I was a gangster, money, ladies, Tupac", and he told me "look here man". He made me realise why do you have to go so far when everything is here at home. And I took it in and started writing and he started editing my verse, he showed me how much bars, how full the page must be. I practiced my, practiced my verse everyday I'm going over the song. He organised us a original beat. And we went to a studio in*

*Hillview, Tyron's studio. And I was very excited I recorded my first song. My voice was very thin there.*

And

*The first thing I wrote was "baby girl I like your style, I wish we could spend a little while. So I can press your numbers like I press a dial". All stuff like that. So Hoppie asked me "what's the message behind that"...so I was like..."I'm gonna knop this kind (have sex with this girl) and stuff" and he said why do you wanna get that out there? Isn't 50 cent saying the same stuff? What makes you Fabio? So I said I don't know and he said write a couple of things down... and I owned that verse, that was my verse. And the message that came out was much bigger than talking about dating a girl and talking about a girl's private parts and I felt better writing a verse like that than writing about having sex with a girl. I don't want to be a pervert, especially now that I'm a dad. So ever since that day I've changed, there's a lot of other things I can talk about. Look at our government, corruption all the way. I have a poet license that allows me to say certain things.*

Stories of initiation into the DVS place comprise narratives of transformation from a naïve affinity towards American popular culture, materialism and misogynistic sentiments, to DVS members beginning to write about their identities and the local environment in which they are positioned. In each of these stories the young people reflect on their values and their position in society and then express aspects of their identities through a public performance. This is achieved in relation to the challenges Hoppie sets these individuals and the fraternal guidance that he provides. In Aaron's case the process culminates in his recording a track, a public event with a product of which he is proud. Fabio is able to use lyric writing to express a politically aware, gendered identity that is congruent with the CRAAG work he is conducting and values that he has adopted. In both of these instances Hoppie challenges these young people to think about their values and cultural reference points, catalysing personal change in the process. Embracing local cultural forms was one of the values displayed by earlier Cape Town hip-hop groups like Prophets of da City and Black Noise, with DVS members positioning themselves in line with those values.

Through the Imagined space of DVS these young people develop new ideological positions based on embracing local forms of culture and resisting values of consumerism linked to global capitalism. They learn language and forms of communication through concepts, such as ‘consciousness’ and ‘poetic license’. These concepts are linked to localised and globalised conscious hip-hop culture, amalgamated with discourses and ideas from local NGOs, resulting in an Imagined, hybridised product. These influences result in new discursive positions and exposure to a different set of utterances that may potentially be used dialogically, to reflect on, debate and think about a range of concepts and perspectives. Alternatively, these new concepts and utterances could simply become a new orthodoxy that is accepted and utilised without questioning.

The Imagined space created through NGO discourse and hip-hop culture, therefore led to the young people involved in DVS being exposed to a wide range of new ideas and concepts. DVS members used these terms in the different dialogic interactions in which they participated. Utilising these languages and engaging in sets of social relations contributed to a form of informal pedagogy. However, to emphasise, access to and the acquisition of these discourses and concepts does not ensure that dialogic learning has taken place. As the next section shows, DVS members need to think about and reflect on concepts and ideas, in order to learn from them.

### **“My porridge bowl is now a satellite dish”: Doodvenootskap, dialogue and other dilemmas**

In this final section of the DVS analysis chapter I look at examples of dialogues between myself and DVS members, analysing what these young men have learnt in their dealings with CRAAG and engagements with hip-hop culture. I then proceed to examine the lyrics of an album produced by one member of the group,

but to which the entire group contributed. The album, called *Skollyhood*<sup>9</sup>: *chapter one, realities face*, serves as another example of youth in dialogue with the contexts in which they live. Through exploring these conversations and written lyrics it was apparent that dialogue emerged through the ways in which these young people use their linguistic utterances to make sense of Real and Imagined socio-spatial relations. In other words, learning through dialogue involved these young people grappling with the words of others, such as utterances from NGO personnel and hip-hop culture, as they struggled to translate these concepts and language, such that they may be used in debates and knowledge co-construction, in other contexts of their lives.

An example of this kind of dialogic learning being stifled is depicted in the following exchange between myself and Hoppie, as he attempts to use concepts and knowledge that he has acquired elsewhere, in conversation with me. Hoppie recalls an incident during the period following his rehabilitation from crystal methamphetamine addiction and involvement with gangsterism, a time in which he spent a year in Riverside renovating a house owned by his aunt. During that phase of his life he met a group of matriculants, a crew called Four Corners, some of whom have gone on to become successful local hip-hoppers:

*H: I made **examples**, what is cool what isn't cool and then they said to me, "oh that's a **metaphor**, that's a **simile**". Now, I said to them, "how do you know that?" And they said no, they do **poetry**, they are learning it now at school. I said to them "do me a favour man, bring me a **handbook**." So they brought me a **handbook**. They were in matric but I was finished school in standard 4. And at that stage my mind wasn't fully **developed**, I did things that I didn't know that I was doing. Like I used **personification**, I would use **metaphors and similes**. I just used it and I used it cool.*

*A: Do you think it's important to know that?*

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<sup>9</sup> A skollie is a Kaapse Afrikaans word that means 'hooligan' or lower-class and badly mannered person.

*H: It is important to know it. Because then you have a sense of...to like **educate** man. If you don't know what a metaphor is... then how can I explain to them (DVS) how to use a **metaphor**? What is **personification**? I got better insight into what **poetry** is about when I knew what a **metaphor** is, what is **similes** what is **personification**, what is, **parable**, what is **paradox**, how to use it when to use and what made it so cool. For example, "there Bones walks away from Sullivan". That's a cool **personification**. Bones is somebody's nickname but bones is also bones. If we talk about, "there the wind goes to lie". Is it **personification** in a **literal saying**? "There the wind goes to lie." The wind just go lay.*

(Translated from the Afrikaans. English words that were used by the interviewee are in **bold**.)

This story demonstrates how forms of transmission or 'banking' learning may result from informal pedagogical interactions, such as those in local hip-hop culture, as Hoppie tried to gain access to a textbook in order to learn about figures of speech. Through contact with another local crew, Hoppie is exposed to a set of concepts related to figures of speech. In his conversations with me it was clear that he has understood these different linguistic forms. Through interactions with students, who had progressed further, comparatively, in their formal education, Hoppie comes to realise that figurative language used in hip-hop is linked to usages in other contexts, such as poetry and literature. He was able to acquire that knowledge through reading the school textbook that the members of *Four Corners* shared with him.

However, dialogic learning involves using that information in dialogues with other people, such as myself. Hoppie's examples of figurative language, in this excerpt, are professed without references to contextual information, to how they are used and they do not invite responses from me, such that we may have engaged in conversation and co-constructed knowledge in relation to these utterances and their meanings. His 'punch lines', such as "daar loop Bene af van Sullivan" (*there Bones walks away from Sullivan*) and "daar gaan le die wind" (*there the wind goes to lie*), therefore stand alone as monological statements and they did not



make complete sense to me. The utility of simply being able to recite an example of personification, such as “daar loop Bene af van Sullivan” (*there Bones walks away from Sullivan*), is unclear. Additional information regarding the identities of the people concerned and the contexts in which they live, would render his figurative example more meaningful. Similarly, “daar gaan le die wind” (*there the wind goes to lie*) is meaningless without a context and a purpose to this figure of speech. The point is that by focusing on the figure of speech itself, Hoppie is not developing an understanding of how it relates to broader forms of dialogue, heteroglossia or how this linguistic construction may be used in debates and conversations with others. The name “Bene” (Bones), which is apparently a common nickname in working-class former ‘Coloured’ neighbourhoods, could be used to describe social problems such as malnutrition or food insecurity. But it needs to be used in relation to a broader context or described in more detail and then invite a response from the interviewer or other talking partner, such that co-constructed knowledge may emerge. Dialogic learning could potentially take place if, for example young people like Hoppie are able to integrate linguistic constructions, such as figurative language, into dialogic interactions and engage with other utterances, as well as the social contexts in which these utterances emerge. DVS members often recited punch lines as examples of the sophistication of their lyrical abilities, without linking these to other utterances and the social contexts in which they and these words are dialogically positioned. At times the words recited by DVS members demonstrated the problems involved in monological texts that are self-referential and not actively communicated in a rigorous, explicit and interactive manner.

This excerpt does demonstrate, however, that certain authoritative discourses, such as the official terms for different figures of speech, may be desirable to young people when these discourses are not imposed in an authoritarian manner. Hoppie acknowledges that a body of knowledge exists that is taught in the formal education system to which he was not exposed. He respects and values this knowledge, related to different figures of speech, stating that understanding how to use these rhetorical devices, in context-specific ways, ensures that one is “educated”. Authoritative discourse and centripetal strands of language may therefore take on new meanings when acquired by youth through their own



agency, as they seek out these forms of knowledge and attempt to engage with them. This supports Bakhtin (1981) and Matusov's (2007) claims that authoritative and internally persuasive discourses may be united and that the interaction between the two may powerfully shape an individual's ideological consciousness.

Another example of Rico reproducing an authoritative discourse acquired in interactions with CRAAG staff, without reflecting on its meaning, is detailed below:

*A: **and what makes a good lyric?***

*R: **freedom of speech.***

*A: and what does it mean, **freedom of speech?***

*R: it means a lot for me, **especially** with the work that we're doing now. We're building resilience, now resilience for me is, resistance. I am a resistance against gangsterism. The best lyrics instead of **accepting** it you rebel against it. The coolest lyrics in terms of **hardcore, commercial and underground** is to **manipulate** the mind....for example "without a gun I a man, I will finish you reading a magazine"*

*A: but for example, **Nazi Germany had bad values and manipulated people in a bad way.** Is it good lyrics if it's used for bad purposes?*

*R: that's because our people aren't **educated** man. Now they misinterpret. Do you hear what I say "without a gun I a man, I will finish you reading a **magazine.**" Hear that lyric. It's very **powerful**. He doesn't know if I am talking about a **magazine** like Huis Genoot or a **magazine** that goes into a gun. Now people can **misinterpret** that. And that's why we do **intros**. In most of our CDs we do intros. "If you think I am a gangster I'm not." We make such things clear. But people misinterpret. Like I say "I will chop off your arm then you can sue for **armed robbery.**" People interpret that **literally**, my bru. It isn't **literal** it's just a **pun**.*

(Translated from the Afrikaans. English words that were used by the interviewee are in **bold**.)

The dialogue above involves Rico stating that the value of a lyric is based on 'freedom of speech', which can be used to 'manipulate minds' and build 'resilience' in local communities by exposing youth to creative uses of language such as "sonder a gun is ek a man" (without a gun I am a man). When I asked him what 'freedom of speech means', he answers in terms of the relevance it has to his life but does not share what he thinks the term means or invite me to provide my own interpretation, such that we may debate the meaning of 'freedom of speech'. He immediately places this term into the context in which he is working, but does not engage me in dialogue or further explore the meaning of this concept. In other words, he doesn't answer my question, but uses my question to move on to a set of related terms that pertain to the human rights discourse of CRAAG and concepts like 'resilience' and 'resistance'. Rico is able to give examples in terms of how 'freedom of speech', 'resilience' and 'manipulation' are used in his everyday practices, but he does not attempt to analyse the complexities and context specific implications of these concepts. He assimilates these ideas into his repertoire, but it is unclear whether he has fully interrogated their meanings.

As a means of further exemplifying his lack of reflection in relation to certain concepts, according to Rico, 'resistance' is related to opposing gangsterism and creating innovative lyrics that denigrate violence and a particular brand of masculinity. However, by following this logic one may simply create a new orthodoxy that is affirmed because it opposes gangsterism and not because of some generalizable principles that have been reached through reflecting on gangsterism and trying to understand the problematic elements of this phenomenon. Resistance to gangsterism may simply become a new authoritarian discourse, with little dialogue being produced, as was the case with the vigilante group PAGAD, in Cape Town in the late 1990s.

When I try to raise this issue with him, referencing Nazi Germany, again he does not answer my question or engage with the underlying principal of interrogating whether 'manipulating minds' is a worthy ambition, regardless of the context. As the exchange continues, he is unable to engage me in dialogue with regard to the potential problems associated with aiming to 'manipulate minds', as he lacks a

broader conceptual repertoire or historical knowledge in order to interrogate the concept of 'manipulation'. He remains fixated on the value of his own lyrical construction and then becomes distracted as he thinks that I am accusing him of perpetuating violent values, something that has caused conflict between CRAAG and DVS. At times CRAAG have expressed unhappiness that DVS' lyrics glorify violence and the NGO has even demanded that DVS refrain from producing these kinds of lyrics, without initiating debate around why these utterances are problematic.

While Rico's lyric pertaining to masculinity and guns ("without a gun I am a man") comprises an interesting play on words, it is a closed statement that does not invite an answer or response and is, therefore, a form of an authoritative voice. Concepts like 'freedom of speech', 'resistance' and 'resilience' may therefore fail to stimulate forms of dialogic learning if they are not reflected upon and questioned in terms of their relevance to both local and wider contexts and used dialogically, in interactions with others. Dialogic learning occurs through questioning and debating issues, rather than reciting discourses and concepts that circulate amongst CRAAG and the global hip-hop community.

Another example that further illustrates how dialogue may enhance learning processes for members of groups like DVS, is observed in Aaron's description of what it means to defeat an opponent lyrically in a hip-hop battle:

*Aaron: If I should battle a rapper, you should kill him lyrically, cause if you gonna push him down on facts that's not gonna mean anything to him, its just sounds he's hearing, he's not gonna hear any metaphors, puns, personifications, so he'll kill you easily if he must come back with all of that elements of hip-hop.*

*Adam: Why does that make you win?*

*Aaron: It's like the crowd knows about rapping. Either the crowd or him himself or the judges, but I was never yet at a battle, but I know if I should battle someone in the street, I'll spit something lyrical to show I know poems, I know what is a simile, what is a metaphor, I can make something dead alive and that's what people*

*want to hear, they don't want to hear you reading a story or a article, that's the picture, but then you bring a bigger picture to the story...like I've got this line "I will break your arm off and then you can sue for armed robbery". Then the crowd wont laugh cause it's a shit joke.*

*Adam: So it's about beating the person by being creative with words not dissing them personally?*

*Aaron: It's lyrical, lyrical... I get the opportunity to say what I want to say, freedom of speech, cause in most cases you wont get that opportunity.*

Aaron explains that the value of rap lyrics is based on the figurative language one is able to use when 'spitting' one's lines and not simply by insulting somebody based on their appearance, life history or personality traits. Aaron says that 'facts' merely comprise sounds in a battle; they do not have value in terms of their utility in this particular context, as one is attempting to demonstrate one's skill and mastery of rapping. In other words, lyrics attain value based on whether they contain innovative uses of language that are able to make connections between different interpretations of the words themselves and the contexts in which they are used and to which they refer. There was general agreement amongst DVS members that a 'battle' needs to be won 'lyrically' and not by 'putting somebody down on facts'. This implies that esteemed lyrics are actively created and used in battles, dialogically, as responses to what other rappers have 'spat', not as predetermined facts. "Making something dead alive" alludes to the value of using linguistic constructions in order to impress the audience through a message and words that extend beyond literal meanings. "Bringing a bigger picture to the story" means enhancing the perspective or contextualising the lyrics that are being created through analytical ability, creativity and linking particular lines to broader social contexts. It necessarily entails engaging with and building upon the story that already exists, in a dialogical fashion.

Aaron is therefore hinting at the links between the specific lyrics being created and a broader context, a bigger 'story' that gives these lyrics meaning. He understands that words have meaning through the ways in which they are used,

in context and in answer to utterances that precede them – what I have described as the basic tenets of dialogism. As his reference to “consciousness” earlier in the chapter demonstrates, this process is enhanced by creating lyrics that can be thought about and reflected upon, not merely generated instinctively. Lyrics should also not be predetermined and clichéd, like the joke about armed robbery, but need to be produced in response to what one’s opponent is ‘spitting’. Prowess is therefore demonstrated through the use of stylistic and idiomatic language that asserts the identity of the group, including the crowd and judges. The value of hip-hop lyrics is therefore related to an individual’s ability to coopt a public space and exert a group identity, skilfully, through the use of language.

In this conversation Aaron answers my questions and is able to participate in an exchange in which our utterances are connecting and creating a co-constructed product. He is not avoiding the issues by reverting to his own internal thoughts and self-referential utterances. Thus, we are able to engage with one another in a form of dialogue. Although Aaron struggles to express the exact meaning of the concept of “lyrical” or to double-voice it into his own conceptual network, he is clearly grappling with the meaning of this concept, as he thinks about the contexts surrounding the lyrics he is producing, in dialogue with myself. The conversations with DVS members therefore illustrate how creating hip-hop lyrics needs to be connected, dialogically, to broader contexts and used in conversation with other concepts, ideas and people, in order for young people to learn in relation to these phenomena. Conscious hip-hop can result in forms of dialogic learning if it catalyses the use of new concepts, in exchanges with others and in relation to the Real and Imagined contexts in which these concepts and discourses emerge. If these concepts and ideas are used without reflection or dialogue they may simply become new authoritarian discourses that do not stimulate young people to think about the places through which they move.

I would like to describe and analyse the lyrics of an album made in 2012 by one DVS member, known as Ssslang (snake), but to which the entire group contributed, as a final example of a text illuminating place-based dialogic learning amongst DVS members. What follows is a descriptive overview of the album’s

lyrics as a whole and a more detailed analysis of one track that explores some of the contradictions inherent in growing up in Rosemary Gardens.

The album's title, *Skollyhood: chapter one, reality's face*, is emblematic of many of the social relations that are referenced in the 13 tracks. The title constitutes a tongue-in-cheek glamorisation of a potential Hollywood superstar, but also a self-mockery of the subject's 'lower-class' status ('lower class' is a self-referential term used in the lyrics of the album). This tension between 'glamour and nothingness', alluded to in the title, is reiterated at various points in the album, for example in the following lyrics:

*In the evening I lie and I hear 500 thousand people scream my name  
Me, standing on a **stage**, because I'm **complicated** with a **plan**  
On a **silver platter**, **sick of living up to other people's standards**, **why must I**  
**be compared to Brad Pitt if I've got my own life to live.***

(Translated from the Afrikaans. English words that were used in the original are in **bold**.)

Ssslang engages with the binary between fame and insignificance by generating a number of philosophical musings about the meaning of life and mass media portrayals of success. These are interspersed with references to his social status, as he directly questions the notion of "standards" and the processes and people that determine these social benchmarks. This inquiry regarding social status is conducted dialogically and creatively. For example, at one point in track three a mock conversation plays out between Ssslang and a peer who calls him a "lower-class fuck." Although Ssslang stated at Youth Amplified that many children in Rosemary Gardens idealise DVS, a phenomenon I observed at the coffee bar evening I attended, there is also an ever-lurking self-belief that Ssslang is simply a 'common hooligan'. The album therefore engages dialogically with this tension between Ssslang's aspirations for self-definition through music and art and society's classification of Rosemary Gardens youth as lower-class, badly behaved and uneducated. The title *Skollyhood* combines these two opposing identities or

statuses, within the medium of rapping the lyrics that he has written, allowing Ssslang to experiment and play with these contradictions.

The Real context of Rosemary Gardens is described throughout the album, as Ssslang's utterances comprise a response to the Real conditions in which he lives. Everyday life in this neighbourhood and the violence that permeates it are vividly portrayed throughout the tracks. For example the chorus of track nine reiterates: "Instant pudding, instant coffee, instant dood met (instant death with) a once off guarantee", illustrating the fleeting and temporary value of life in Rosemary Gardens, which is compared to cheap consumable products.

The social effects of poverty and violence result in bodily references punctuating the lyrics, as living in Rosemary Gardens is an extremely corporeal experience. The violence that is commonly observed in the neighbourhood and which is lodged in the consciousness of youth from the area, results in injuries to bodies, meaning that the body is a common reference point for this young writer. The subtitle of the album, "reality's face", is an example of a reference to the most personally definitive of body parts, a face, as the album hints that it will provide insight into life in Rosemary Gardens, including descriptions that involve body parts. The first line of track three, the song that is explored in more depth below, is: "my self-confidence se boosters het bruises" ("my self-confidence boosters have bruises"). The line is clearly a reference to narcotics, probably crystal methamphetamine (which he references at another point in the album), an addictive habit that marks the body, usually through visible weight loss. Ssslang is therefore able to express, creatively, some of the pain associated with experimenting with recreational narcotics, through the metaphorical use of the word 'bruises', another reference to his body. The body is a marker of physical difference that has been used in South Africa to distinguish between groups of people in terms of their social status. Bodies define a person socially and personally and youth from Rosemary Gardens are aware of this fact, as evidenced by the *Skollyhood* album.

As expected from a teenage boy, there are a number of lyrics related to romantic relationships. Some of these lyrics demonstrate problematic misogynistic and

homophobic attitudes. For example, track four is a fairytale of a ‘Cinderella’ who he meets and has sexual intercourse with, despite her being part of a ‘committed’ relationship. In the chorus he tells her to “turn around touch the ground oooh la la.” Even though Ssslang is an advocate for a children’s rights and anti-abuse organisation, the glamorisation of a particular brand of masculine sexuality and women as objects of desire, are unreflexively asserted in this track. There are also homophobic references to ‘faggots’ and ‘bunnys’ (slang for homosexual) at various points on the album. It is unclear whether these terms are being used derisively or not. Themes that emerge from the *Skollyhood* album therefore demonstrate these young men’s engagement with the historical context and immediate environment in which they live, as well as their attitudes to a range of other phenomena, related to their lives.

I would like to analyse the third track of *Skollyhood*, called ‘listen to your heart’, another bodily reference, in greater detail. I believe that it exemplifies some of the dialogic interactions that occur between DVS, Hoppie, CRAAG and the Rosemary Gardens community and, more particularly, illuminates how these conversations impact on this young man’s expanding ideological consciousness, in interactions with others.

The track seamlessly amalgamates English and Afrikaans, regularly code-switching between the two languages. This demonstrates the heteroglot nature of these young people’s linguistic worlds and the skill that they use to navigate the multi-lingual contexts through which they move. For example, the first line states that:

*My self-confidence se boosters het bruises, ek is n problem as ek wil unique is*  
*(My self-confidence boosters have bruises, I am a problem if I want to be unique)*

In this line Ssslang demonstrates how he is able to alternate between English and Kaapse Afrikaans, almost on a ‘word for word’ basis, supporting Alim & Pennycook’s (2007) notion that hip-hop inverts Bernstein’s codes, as youth actually expand a restricted language based on a set of rules. These youth produce an elaborate set of interpretations and linguistic constructions, extending



the restricted, rule-bound forms of the English language. This implies that the rigidly prescribed codes of standard English are actually restricted in comparison to the manner in which they are used by youth (Alim & Pennycook, 2007).

Ssslang is aware of the paradoxes surrounding the NGO industry and the operations of organisations like CRAAG:

*organisations are competing doing it for charity, stepping into reality is sin for clarity*

The irony of competing for charity is clear to this young man, as he questions why groups would need to compete in conducting these activities, as charity is supposedly an altruistic act. The ironies of globalisation and the values it has permeated also impact on the consciousness of this young man. One sees rows of satellite dishes in Rosemary Gardens and yet hunger is supposedly widespread:

*My porridge bowl is now a satellite dish.*

Hoppie's critique of young people's idealisation of American consumer culture therefore stimulates these youth to think about and consider the contradictions that are apparent in the environments in which they live. This is underlined by another lyric:

*Babies lost their toys want their tannies wil rattle.*  
*(Babies lost their toys because their mothers want to rattle.)*

In this line Ssslang is commenting on mothers' resources being utilised for personal entertainment, instead of contributing towards the developmental needs of their children. He uses a creative and intelligent pun on the word 'rattle', a baby's toy but also the mother's pleasure in 'rattling' or 'partying'. CRAAG's values and the dialogues he has shared with Dylan therefore stimulate Ssslang to think about parent-child interactions in Rosemary Gardens and some of the problematic elements that are observed in these relationships. He is then able to

express these thoughts in his own language, demonstrating a form of double-voicedness and showing that he has thought about and understood these ideas, not simply accepted and reproduced the opinions of somebody else.

Ssslang illustrates how he has internalised the CRAAG human-rights discourse regarding children's decision making, but that he has also thought about these ideas:

*decisions word gemaak sonder ons en nou moet ek my bek hou*  
(*decisions are made without us and now I must shut my bek [mouth of an animal]*)

His understanding of young people's participation in decision-making is not simply reiterated in the clichéd children's rights discourse, but is translated and double-voiced in Ssslang's own language, as he ironically denigrates himself with reference to shutting his animalistic, "lower-class" mouth. The ambivalence pertaining to whether his actions are truly path-breaking, or simply the pointless activities of a "working-class 'Coloured' boy" is again observed towards the end of the track in:

*Jy's n (you are an) infection, you were born from a weak reaction.*

The "weak reaction" has racial overtones, as racial mixing and being a "Coloured' half-caste' is implied by the 'weak' conception.

Ssslang's ideological consciousness therefore develops through dialogues with Dylan and CRAAG, in relation to children's rights, and with Hoppie, who questions why these young people engage with forms of global consumer culture when their identities and most pressing concerns are located locally. These dialogues stimulate forms of questioning and thinking, as evidenced in the *Skollyhood* album. The value of these lyrics as cultural products and learning tools therefore lies in their potential to form part of ongoing dialogues and debates that relate to the Real and Imagined spaces in which these young people live. Through this album and its lyrics, Ssslang therefore demonstrates elements of Lived space and dialogic learning. He manages to avoid simply reiterating the words of others,

without thinking, questioning or linking utterances to the contexts in which they are produced. The album therefore needs to be interpreted not only by decoding the meaning of the lyrics, but by exploring the social practices, the Lived spaces and dialogues that precede and result in this product (Lamont-Hill & Petchauer, 2013). The processes through which young people translate these concepts and ideas into their own forms of language, is integral to dialogic Lived learning. The forms of self-parody observed in the terms like *Skollyhood* and *weak reaction*, illustrate questioning and engagement with the social contexts in which these young people live and offer rich potential for further dialogic engagement. These lyrics are therefore cultural products, comprising ongoing sets of conversations that have a formative effect on the young people involved in their production.

## **Conclusion**

As a learning place, the Doodvenootskap was produced in relation to Real spatial forces that resisted the oppressive residential segregation of apartheid. Specifically, DVS' learning practices take place through links to NGOs that were responsible for erecting sites for community development. DVS is also created in opposition to the consequences of physical, racial segregation, as the young people involved aspire to create an alternative education to what is learnt through gang affiliation. Contributing to this opposition to oppressive Real conditions provides DVS members with positive self-esteem, as they become part of an 'Imaginary' social movement that strives to improve living conditions for Rosemary Gardens residents. Doodvenootskap members learn new concepts and discourses, such as those associated with the field of public health and notions of human rights, through interactions with CRAAG. The language used in the Imagined space of the hip-hop sub-culture also introduces these young people to new concepts and ideas.

At the same time, however, members of the group often recited 'NGO speak' and hip-hop punch lines or lyrics without describing the relationship between these

utterances and the social contexts in which the young people and these words are placed. There were occasions when the lyrics DVS members wrote and the utterances they produced were self-referential and closed, in terms of their orientation to potential responses. In order for young people to learn dialogically, utterances need to be connected to broader contexts and used in conversation with other concepts, ideas and people. Otherwise they will simply become new authoritarian discourses that do not stimulate young people to think about the places through which they move.

Through the concepts of a 'youth movement', 'dialogic Lived learning' and 'subaltern counterpublic', it is possible to heed the call of some scholars for analyses of hip-hop to move beyond the educational potential of rap lyrics and link hip-hop to educational praxis like critical pedagogy, allowing hip-hop to engage with issues of power, identity and policy (Lamont-Hill & Petchauer, 2013). Lamont-Hill & Petchauer (2013) urge for scholarly work on hip-hop to broaden its range, extending to other aspects of hip-hop cultural production and the spaces, places and communities where people actually create hip-hop. In this chapter I have used a dialogic theory of learning, within a particular place, to analyse how the rap music of one group of young men is situated within a complex set of dialogues with relevant others and influenced by different spatial forces. Through decoding the lyrics these young people write, but by also exploring the multiple contexts in which they are produced, a more nuanced understanding of these texts can be attained. This type of analysis may then provide insights into the potential uses of these social practices in both formal and informal learning environments.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **DIALOGIC LEARNING AT YOUTH AMPLIFIED**

*Radio's got this beautiful thing about it. You can hear your own voice on tape, it just gives you goose bumps, it does something to you. And so many people that never thought they'd ever be heard from the speakers of a ghetto blaster, heard themselves suddenly through the speakers of a ghetto blaster. And I recorded them, and I could look in their eyes and see this excitement in their eyes of recognizing their own voices on the air. And those small things were, for me, the most beautiful stuff.*

Participant in Bosch, 2006: 256

#### **Introduction**

My analysis now moves out of the Rosemary Gardens community altogether, as I describe how young people from Rosemary Gardens High School learnt through dialogues with peers from three other schools at the Youth Amplified radio show. I facilitated Youth Amplified for one and a half years, in which time five recorded shows and eight live shows took place. During this same period I conducted individual interviews with all of the learners from the four schools that participated in the programme and made copious field notes based on my observations of the informal discussions and interactions that took place between students at the radio station.

Themes that were particularly recurrent at Youth Amplified were the institutional cultural norms, values and practices of the schools that learners attended and students' talk about race. These two themes, 'school institutional culture' and

‘race talk’, fuelled a number of the conflicts that took place at Youth Amplified. However, ‘conflict’ is included as a third, separate section in the chapter, as ‘conflict’ explores the nature of the interactions between learners, whereas the two previous sections represent themes that contributed to the content of discussions at Youth Amplified.

The chapter is therefore divided into four sections, beginning with an initial descriptive overview of the RGHS learners involved in Youth Amplified, as my focus for this thesis is on how young people from Rosemary Gardens learn in different places. I then analyse the two main themes, namely ‘school institutional culture’ and ‘race’, themes which emerged from transcripts of the actual shows, individual interviews with learners and participant observations. Learners that attended the two elite schools transported their schools’ institutional cultures into the radio show. This led to certain discourses that operate at elite Cape Town schools pervading Youth Amplified and particular kinds of dialogic interactions emerging between learners. Race was used as the dominant trope in learners’ descriptions of their social worlds. This concept generated emotional debates on and off air between students from different schools. In the final section of the chapter I explore, in detail, one of the conflicts that took place during the radio show and how it affected the production of dialogue and learning at Youth Amplified.

### **Rosemary Gardens High School students at Youth Amplified**

I recruited RGHS students for Youth Amplified through the school principal, Mr Williams. After discussing my idea with Mr Williams he instructed one of the teachers to select five learners to participate in the show. The teacher chose learners with whom she was familiar and to whom she offered a great deal of pastoral care, students who she regularly invited to eat meals at her house and transported to and from extra-mural activities. Although I would confidently say that each of these five learners was highly intelligent, none were invited to the school prizegiving, in 2012, an occasion at which the top ten learners in each grade were present. The selected students therefore represented the small

proportion of young people that remain at RGHS for grades 10-12, but they were not exceptional students in terms of their school academic results.

I facilitated the show from July 2011 to December 2012 and while all five RGHS students attended regularly during 2011, only two of the five learners originally selected for the show attended consistently during 2012. To expand on the three learners whose attendance diminished, one grade 11 woman stopped attending school and the radio show after she married a man from Pakistan. Mr Williams indicated that her decision was informed by family pressure and the bridegroom's need for a South African passport. Another young man attended regularly during the first year, before his school and radio show attendances decreased in 2012, after being badly beaten by a gang. A third girl participated in many of the programmes and functions in which a few selected learners at the school partake, making it difficult for her also regularly to attend the radio show, as she was already over-committed. When, on occasion, I encountered her at the school she always spoke fondly of the programme and continued, verbally at least, to commit herself to participation. This meant that even though all of the RGHS learners regularly told me that they thoroughly enjoyed their time at Youth Amplified, due to the turbulent circumstances in their community, three out of the five young people discontinued their participation in the programme or participated sporadically, limiting their learning in this place. My substantial interaction and observations, in terms of the participation of RGHS learners at Youth Amplified during 2012 therefore revolved around two students, although contributions from and individual interviews with the others did take place.

I would like to describe the two students that I got to know well in a bit more detail, as I believe that this information sheds light on the Rosemary Gardens students' participation and dialogic learning at Youth Amplified. Tracey, was 16 years old and in grade 10 in 2012. She is a fervently outspoken, quick-witted and articulate young woman. Moving house disrupted Tracey's schooling and her participation at Youth Amplified in early 2012, as she vacated her mother's house and took up residence with her father in Mitchell's Plain. This meant a daily, hour-long commute by bus to RGHS, as she vehemently opposed changing schools. She said that her mother consumed alcohol in abundance and was operating a

small commercial sex enterprise from their home in Rosemary Gardens. Tracey's domestic situation was therefore volatile and this impacted on her emotional disposition. One Saturday morning she arrived for a Youth Amplified show when no session had been planned. After receiving a telephone call, I drove to the radio station and collected her, prepared breakfast and gave her money for a taxi to return home. The next time I encountered Tracey at RGHS she said that she needed R7 for taxi fare to travel to the bus station, stating that she was not able to walk to the station for fear of being seen by her father's family. I did not understand why she was averse to her father's family identifying her en route to the station, but I was vigilant to students taking advantage of me and refused to give her the money. She responded by strongly expressing her disapproval, followed by punishing me by not attending Youth Amplified for a number of weeks.

This example illustrates the tenuous and complex relationships that I shared with some of these learners and the unequal power dynamic that existed between a 'White' middle-class doctoral student and working-class youth from a low-income neighbourhood. Power dynamics informed many of the relationships that Tracey described with older people and peers. In an individual interview she told me:

*T: I think it's the authority that makes children care. The older person will determine my action...If you gonna talk to me and tell me why I shouldn't do this and do that then I'm gonna respond better. I'm not racist or anything but I see it every day, a 'Coloured' mother is gonna tell her child, 'moenie daai doen nie jy gaan seer kry' (don't do that, you will get hurt), but she's not gonna tell the child how the child is gonna get hurt, 'ek gaan for jou bledy' (I'm going to bloody...you) then swear at the child. Then you get the 'White' mother will say don't play with the glass you gonna cut your fingers and then the child's gonna listen cause the child knows my mommy said if I play with that then blood's gonna come out. If you don't go the extra mile then the child won't listen. A child wants to hear something nice. And at Prince Phillip they didn't have that...This school (RGHS) it's tough trying to survive. For me it's different, the other children they don't get discriminated because of the language they speak. Since last year we were the 1<sup>st</sup> English class after a few years and the Afrikaans children didn't like it cause*



*English is "so called sturvy". And they look down on us cause we don't reach their level. We're low. Or we wanna be up there like they say. And with the gangsterism on the school ground it's hard. The boys mostly they wanna be part of this and that gang. They don't shoot on the school. For me I'm here, if I wanna go to Cresthill I can't cause at our school there's corner boys and at Cresthill there's terror squads and so if I go there my life is in danger...*

*A: how did the decision get made for you to come here?*

*T: It's school fees, it's very cheap. It's R700 this year and R800 next year. It's R1200 or R1500 at other schools. The nearest most expensive school is Bothaville, that's 1500 a month and then 1000 for your books. At our school they say you must go on that trip. But if I get a affidavit to say I can't go then I stay at home. At Bothaville they just tell you this is the trip this is the fees and you can't say no and my mom was late for applications at all the other schools.*

This extract provides some subtle insights into the home, school and community places through which Tracey moves and the kinds of learning interactions that occur in her daily life. Tracey's social world comprises of a set of complex hierarchies, related to race, class, gender and language. Her school and home spaces are characterised by adult-led, authoritative discourses, resulting in intergenerational interactions that contain a chain of command, a lack of joint decision-making, communication that is one-way and lacking in participation from young people like herself. Tracey uses a parent-child vignette to explain how relationships operated between students and educators at her primary school. One explanation for this comparison between educators and parents is that learner-educator relationships are based on pastoral care and not, primarily, on intellectual development at poor South African schools (Watson, 2011). For Tracey, dialogues with educators and parents, at home and at school, are therefore often condescending in nature and are rarely based on dialogue through which common meaning is negotiated (Gadamer, 1975). In these kinds of interactions young people are rarely provided with the opportunity to lay down their own set of 'answering' words or utterances (Volosinov, 1973).

To Tracey, this type of adult-child communication is racialised in Rosemary Gardens' schools and homes and she explains how she perceives it to differ from similar interactions in 'White', middle-class spaces. As will become clear, students from all of the participating Youth Amplified schools constantly racialised objects and forms of behaviour. The use of language, Afrikaans kombuistaal in this instance, is integral to her racialised description of these relationships and is used to portray a coarse, uncaring interaction. Although the description of the English speaking, 'White' mother's coaxing words do not constitute a dialogue and comprise a one-way interaction, they are expressed kindly and without the threat of violence. In some instances, English language was therefore associated with forms of care, related to learning, whereas informal Afrikaans was assumed to be authoritative and underpinned by the threat of violence. It is not apparent upon which experiences Tracey formulates her perceptions of 'White' adult-child interactions. However, what is clear is that she has observed subtle differences between her relationships with caregivers and teachers and similar relationships between adults and young people whom she perceives to be elevated in the social hierarchy of the society in which she lives. These social status differences are expressed in racial and linguistic terms. Tracey therefore associates places in the Rosemary Gardens community where informal Afrikaans is used between 'Coloured' adults and young people with authoritative, hierarchical interactions. She describes these exchanges as aggressive and generally lacking mutual respect and care, a state of affairs that does not lead to young people learning.

Tracey speaks English at home to her mother, an invaluable form of linguistic capital that buttressed her in the Youth Amplified place, demonstrated by her contributions at the show and ability to engage in dialogues with learners from other schools. Census data shows that approximately 18% of Rosemary Gardens residents speak English as their mother-tongue language. However, at RGHS Tracey feels persecuted for being placed in the English speaking class and for being 'sturvy', meaning 'exclusive, superior, or having aspirations for upward social mobility', in the eyes of some of her peers. For township youth like Tracey this often takes the form of others judging their educational aspirations, linguistic practices and ostracising them for not performing racialised identities in what is considered to be an 'authentic' manner.

Moving to Tracey's descriptions of the Real space of RGHS, she understands this environment to be dominated by conditions that render this place unsafe, as the area surrounding the school is divided into a set of gang controlled territories. Tracey clearly states the reason why she attends RGHS and identifies financial constraints as the primary mechanism of exclusion in terms of preventing her from attending another, more affluent school. The humiliation of not being able to afford extra curricular activities, like outings, may also be a deterrent to some families, who choose not to send their children to what Tracey refers to as "the nearest most expensive school" (Bray et al, 2010). Tracey has a clear picture of the local school-economy, with the different possibilities and options neatly demarcated.

For Tracey, home, school and community places are therefore characterised by hierarchical relationships and authoritative discourses, as race, class, language and space intersect in different ways. Learners from Rosemary Gardens, like Tracey, are constantly doing headwork (Soudien, 2007), assessing and positioning themselves in the social hierarchy and they regularly feel threatened or inferior, leading to the possibility of combatative interactions that militate against learning with peers, in places like the Youth Amplified radio show. These young people have ideas about race, society and schooling that are formed in the different places through which they move, at home, school and in neighbourhoods and these discourses traverse with them into new places. They also hold perceptions about legitimacy and equality and sometimes resent the fact that they do not attend the "nearest most-expensive school", whilst other students attend these more affluent institutions.

The other learner with whom I became familiar, Mo, was slightly older, 21 years old in 2012, due to the fact that he discontinued his schooling for three years, flirting with gang involvement before returning to school after persuasion from the teacher who selected him to participate in Youth Amplified. Mo was responsible for collecting the money for transport and leading the group to and from the radio station. He is a warm, gentle person with a subtle sense of humour and would like to become a certified carpenter (his father's profession) at a vocational college

when he completes his schooling, because he believes that “papers”, the word he used to describe certification, will aid him to gain employment. Mo said that:

*M: I'm excited to do matric next year. Matric is almost like a shovel. If you don't have a shovel you have to dig with your hands but if you have shovel you can dig far... At Chesterton high (his previous school) the teachers don't care, they say I get my salary at the end of the month so what you do doesn't affect me. The teachers pushing you down, you got no self-esteem to do the work. They always telling you you a nothing. You start to believe you a nothing. You got no motivation.*

Mo values formal educational qualifications, both matric and a carpentry apprenticeship at a Further Education and Training college and understands the value that these qualifications hold in terms of aiding him in realising his aspirations. He uses the metaphor of matric functioning like a shovel, a tool that renders manual labour less arduous. His attraction to education is based on the utility that he perceives educational certification to hold, as he believes that these qualifications will aid him in the labours of life. He did not speak about schooling or further education as exciting him or providing him with opportunities to stimulate his intellect and engage in dialogue with others. This lack of enthusiasm for schooling is partly due to his experiences with teachers at his previous school, who he believed undermined learners through derogatory insults. Mo also described RGHS educators that did not grow up in Rosemary Gardens as lacking empathy towards students:

*M: I was a rude boy, drinking wine, smoke weed, bunk every day. The other teachers that come from other places, they don't really feel how we feel in this place, how it feel to stay here. It's messed up here. They (Rosemary Gardens residents) a group of crabs, crabs in a bowl, they grab and pull you down. They want you to be on their level. They ask me “why you go to school, you old”. I ask them “do you have money? Do you have work?” Then the other people that do have work they tell me naai go to school. But problems at home make it hard to (do school) work. My mommy was in the operation room. Your daddy's a drunk, your brothers a tik kop (meth head). My brother's death was the worst family*

*problem. My mommy still has wounds about that. The only reason the 'White' children, the so called 'White' children have jobs is that they don't have problems. They can only focus on their books. Not worry about food there's always food there. School fees is paid. You just have to do the work. Study, it's there. If everyone in South Africa have to pay the same money, from the doctor to the man in the street, everybody's life would have been nice and civilized. But the government he can get a lot of the drugs out of our place but they leave it to keep us down. "We the middle class. We leave yous to work for us. If you gonna upgrade you gonna be better than us." Most of the 'White' people they not actually clever man I know more than they know about life. They just want to talk to me about stuff they learn out of a book. I say "don't talk to me about that, talk to me about life". What you see, what you experience. You can't talk about stuff you never experience. Anybody could have written a book, even me.*

In this quotation Mo describes the Real difficulties of life in Rosemary Gardens and the stressful experiences related to growing up in this area, including physical health strains, drug addiction and financial constraints. These difficulties impact on Mo's relationships, both with people from Rosemary Gardens and with outsiders, interactions that are dominated by antagonism. In terms of fellow residents, the social problems that plague Rosemary Gardens' inhabitants result in jealousy towards the success of those who, for example, persevere with formal education. This form of resentment is a phenomenon that has been widely documented in other low-income Cape Town neighbourhoods (Ramphela, 2002; Bray et al, 2010). Mo counters this jealousy from others by referring to their lack of employment opportunities, illustrating his belief that formal education and certification may offer him possible forms of future social upliftment.

The difficult circumstances in Rosemary Gardens result in Mo feeling resentful towards RGHS educators who are not able to empathise with learners' emotional and physical hardships, saying "they don't feel how we feel in this place". This emotional rift is likely to hamper teaching and learning, as learners may feel uninterested in learning from educators who they believe are unable to relate to their life circumstances. While educators are under immense pressure simply to

deliver the curriculum and raise examination results, learners from Rosemary Gardens require a great deal of emotional support.

The harsh Real space of Rosemary Gardens also results in Mo's resentment towards more affluent peers, rejecting the "book" knowledge that he states 'White' youth attain and which, in his opinion, does not enhance their intelligence. Like Tracey, Mo makes sense of social stratification in racial terms, although he does mention class-based divisions. Mo compares his circumstances to those of 'White' children who do not have to contend with the stressors that he experiences, difficult conditions which militate against his academic success. The turbulent life conditions that he has experienced from a young age, leads him to conclude that making sense of these experiences shows a greater level of intelligent acumen than reading somebody else's opinions in a book. Dialogue and learning with more affluent educators and peers is therefore disregarded by Mo, due to his perception that these other people are unable to engage with what is meaningful to him and their lack of familiarity with the Real and Imagined social relations that transpire in Rosemary Gardens.

Real and Imagined socio-spatial relations in Rosemary Gardens therefore substantially influence dialogic interactions and learning for youth from this neighbourhood, as they play-out both in Rosemary Gardens and outside of its boundaries. Gang violence, volatile domestic relationships and families trying to ensure their own material survival dominate these young people's everyday lives. Real spatial relations that occur in Rosemary Gardens also impacted on the learners' participation at Youth Amplified, exemplified by the fact that only two learners remained regularly involved in the show over the two-year period. Young people from this neighbourhood compare their situation in Rosemary Gardens to that of more affluent children, who reside in other neighbourhoods, young people who are generally classified in racial terms. The Real spatial practices that occur in Rosemary Gardens are therefore enmeshed with Imagined space that is predominantly interpreted through racial differences. The combination of violent and threatening living conditions, as well as antagonistic relations with teachers and peers, make it extremely difficult to stimulate comfortable dialogic interactions in which these young people may engage, without becoming defensive. Places

dominated by struggle and violence produce interactions characterised by conflict and hierarchy between adults and young people and may lead to youth recreating these kinds of relationships in other places, working against forms of dialogic learning. Nevertheless, some young people from Rosemary Gardens do desire forms of learning that interrogate systemic social injustice, which may render forms of critical pedagogy, like those practiced at Youth Amplified, attractive to youth from this neighbourhood.

**“Like we’re taught at our school, your success depends on your own hard work and effort”: the impact of school institutional culture on learning at Youth Amplified**

The RGHS students were constantly aware of differences between their school (and by extension themselves) and the strong institutional cultures, discourses, norms and values of two of the participating schools at Youth Amplified, namely the former model C school and the Cape Institute of Education (CIE). The institutional cultures of these two schools were prominent in dialogue and learning amongst the wider group of young people. All of the learners that attended Youth Amplified were, to some degree, ‘representing their schools’ at the show, a phrase that is often used at former model C schools in South Africa. To demonstrate how learners represented their schools, the young people announced the schools that they attended at the start of the show, when they introduced themselves. These young people’s utterances would therefore be associated with the schools that they attended, as the show comprised a public forum. Other links with schools included the fact that participants were recruited through school staff and I communicated with learners through personnel at the school. When the group met on Friday afternoons, many youth attended in their school uniforms. Because these young people were representing their schools, they were therefore expected to behave in a manner that was deemed to be congruent with their respective school’s rules, its code of conduct and culture. Learning in the Youth Amplified place was therefore shaped by the Imagined



space of the schools that learners attended elsewhere, transported into the new learning place of Youth Amplified.

As a means of further describing the institutional culture of the CIE, this predominantly residential school for talented township learners was portrayed by its students as an institution that propagated a culture of intense academic competition. The students believed that this school instilled in its learners a strong sense of self, based on intellectual prowess, independence and maturity:

*G: Everyone wants to be in the top 10 so the competitive drive pushes you and it actually makes more clever people.*

*J: The typical example with me, the 1<sup>st</sup> time I met Greg I greeted him but when I heard he wrote that essay and he achieved, I changed my view on him. And I respected him.*

*P: At school, I'm always in my own room studying. We all have to do hard work. To compete that's part of my dream. At school there's a lot of competition, we eat competition, we need competition.*

*G: and that's what competition is, it's a great motivation, a great motivation.*

Student identity, respectability and academic achievement are therefore enmeshed at this school, as learners' sense of self is formed and fuelled within a culture of competitive intellectualism. Prestige and admiration from peers is publically acknowledged by regularly announcing the 'top 10' learners, those with the most excellent academic results in each grade. These young people who attain academic 'excellence' are celebrated and respected, both by their peers and the school, through these announcements that comprise an integral component of the school's culture. Phumla says that the learners 'eat' and 'need' competition. This comment indicates the prevalence and all encompassing nature of this culture, which functions as a component of everyday life, one that apparently 'nourishes' the students. It also demonstrates how these young people retain a strong sense of identity by demonstrating their academic superiority over



other students. Thus, when these students encounter other learners that are sensitive to appearing inferior, such as the RGHS students, the interaction is ripe for conflict that may inhibit rich dialogical learning, as illustrated in the final section of this chapter.

The CIE's institutional culture of competition and academic excellence also consists of instilling a sense of independence and self-sufficiency, where students are expected to demonstrate adult-like behaviour through taking responsibility for their own wellbeing. As a means of exemplification, Themba, who attends the CIE, said the following:

*The Cape Institute is not just a school, it's a sanctuary. In some of our communities there's violence and crime and problems at home...you take a bright student away from that environment and you put him in an environment where he can use his mind and learn. So when he's finished with high school he's equipped to succeed in university and the opportunities provided to him. They're most inquisitive compared to other schools. This school doesn't have set rules, even with the code of conduct, the rules are not enforced like Pinelands High. We supposed to be responsible adults. Like our school doesn't have a bell. You have to check your own time at the end of the period. End of break you have to go. You are responsible for own learning and how you conduct yourself. If you don't study for a test you fail and then you out of Cape Institute and that's that.*

There are distinct benefits linked to a school with a culture that stimulates independence and a sense of responsibility. However, the CIE's code of conduct comes with the threat that if one does not excel academically, not only will these privileges be removed, but the learner will be excluded from the school. It was unclear which forms of support learners are provided with at this school, should they struggle with academic work, and when I inquired with regard to the role of the school counsellor, I was told that he assisted with career guidance, but not primarily with emotional issues. The CIE school culture is therefore based on competition, excellence, individualism and independence. Failure is perceived as the result of individual inability. CIE learners transported these school values, culture and discourses to Youth Amplified, contributing to the nature of

interactions with other learners, as well as how and whether learning took place at Youth Amplified.

As a means of further understanding the CIE's place in the broader society, as well as its institutional culture and values, the school displayed similar values and practices to those that underpin the current South African state. Themba said that:

*If the majority aren't taught in language which they understand, how then are they supposed to excel? We need scientists, we need engineers and if you say something in a language they don't understand, you can't test them. Cause they don't understand in the first place.*

'Excelling' is understood as attaining high marks in subjects such as science and mathematics, skills that may lead to careers like engineering that are perceived to be of benefit to the South African state. The mechanism for judging whether excellence has been attained is testing, without which it is deemed impossible to ascertain whether the level of achievement has been met. Knowledge and competence are therefore defined through testing, a practice that is a regular component of these young people's lives. This reference to testing underlines the general approach of schools, to knowledge and learning, which differs from forms of dialogic learning. Schools and education departments assume that knowledge can be transferred from teachers to learners. Tests can then determine whether students have absorbed this knowledge. By contrast, dialogic learning focuses on the learning process and the interactions between people in dialogues. Questions that stimulate further dialogue and people engaging with the perspectives of one another, instead of test scores, would be indicators that dialogic learning has taken place.

Soudien (2012) writes that the state projects forms of its ideal citizenry through its schools and the CIE, as a recently established, 'custom-made' school, demonstrates elements of the new South African state's 'ideal-type' young South African. This is observed through an individualistic culture of competition that is assumed to benefit individuals and the group, valuing forms of scientific

knowledge and mathematics and constantly requiring individuals to account for their knowledge acquisition through regular tests.

The presence of the CIE institutional culture at Youth Amplified therefore contributed to some of the conflict-ridden dialogues that emerged in this place. The words of Tracey and Mo illustrate how Rosemary Gardens youth believe that financial constraints and social problems, prevalent challenges to residents in their neighbourhood, prevent them from attending other schools and led to their resenting students who sought social elevation and upliftment by attending elite schools. While many CIE students were raised in working-class neighbourhoods, most of these young people come from communities with fewer social problems than Rosemary Gardens and many were fortunate enough to attend better-resourced primary schools. Although there is certainly some truth to the belief amongst CIE learners that their success is based on hard work and individual talent, these are not the only factors that result in their attending this school. The discourses that operate at the CIE also function to embrace the South African state, its values and vision for its citizenry. As has already been observed, RGHS students are sceptical of governmental and other powerful forces that they believe oppress Rosemary Gardens' residents, leading to their possible further annoyance with the institutional culture of the CIE.

Moving on to the former model C school, BHHS, the attitudes of students that attended this school resonated with some aspects of the institutional culture of the CIE, although there were some subtle differences. BHHS learners also exuded a discourse of individualism and a belief that success is based on individual choice, perseverance and hard work. The following are two facebook messages written during the show by the educator in charge of leadership at BHHS and a comment from a learner at Youth Amplified:

*John (reading a facebook message during the show): Mrs Small says "some youth choose it (bunking or skipping school) as an easy way out, it's not peer pressure. Be the change you want to see!"*

*John (reading a facebook message during the show): Mrs Small says “history shows excellent examples of youth from poor environments succeeding and achieving. Take a moment to find the motivation. And develop whole happy youth. Baby steps create change!”*

And:

*BHHS learner: People they are blind sighted. They miss the link between passing grade eight and nine and being successful in the future. You can’t go and miss a whole lot of classes...and be successful. You have to put in the extra mile, like we are taught at our school, your success depends on your own work and effort and that’s your responsibility.*

BHHS educators and students alike therefore perceive success as linked to the hard work ethic of individuals and their determination to succeed. This attitude perpetuates the ideology of the school as a level playing field that is able to highlight individual talent (Bourdieu, 1977). It also reinforces Soudien’s (2007) assertion that the ‘official’ discourse of the school, its values, practices and ideologies, are more prominent at former ‘White’ schools. These ‘official’ school discourses were transported into the new place of Youth Amplified and presented by students as authoritative or uncontested truths regarding success, justice and learning, militating against the interrogation of these supposed facts. These attitudes may be insensitive to learners like Mo, who stated that more privileged learners do not understand the Real social and emotional struggles that RGHS students endure on a daily basis.

In terms of subtle differences between the CIE and BHHS, the culture, values and norms associated with BHHS appeared to be more congruent with its ‘former model C’ heritage, with traces of Christian National education and the British colonial educational system contained in students’ utterances:

*J: ...which is absurd to me coming from a school where uniform is of essence*  
*B: it’s most important*

*J: even though it is might be seen what has uniform got to do with you passing a test, its about being part of a professional environment and when you feel like you're part of a school then you are there to learn and there to educate, then obviously that's when education and knowledge flourishes.*

At BHHS education, knowledge acquisition, personal appearance and schooling are linked to a form of conducting and presenting oneself that is based on a specific notion of respectability and conformity. The ways in which BHHS learners made links between their appearance at school, 'standards' and attitudes towards education more generally, resonates with Dolby's (2002) work at a Kwazulu Natal school. Dolby (2002) illustrated how playing rugby and compulsory adherence to dress standards functioned to reproduce pedagogies and discourses of 'Whiteness'. Through these discourses the school's colonial heritage was preserved, in the form of contemporary practices that comprised of demonstrations of Imagined respectability, manifest in prescribed forms of behaviour and traditions. It is in this set of circumstances that BHHS learners believe "education and knowledge flourish". Learning is therefore enmeshed with Imagined school institutional cultures that are the products of colonialism. Colonial era discourses that continue to operate at BHHS were transported into the Youth Amplified place, producing a range of effects.

Learners that attended relatively more affluent schools therefore reproduced these institutions' values, norms and practices in the new, emerging place of Youth Amplified. At times the RGHS students experienced personal affronts in relation to the attitudes, opinions and circumstances of some of the other students. As indicated by Tracey earlier, some of the young people who attend RGHS realise that financial constraints are preventing them from attending wealthier schools. Schools that perpetuate discourses of hard work, individual achievement and competition, may easily incense marginalised learners, such as those who attend RGHS, resulting in combatative dialogic interactions and limiting learning. The Youth Amplified place comprised a junction or meeting point for learners from different schools, institutions that have radically different histories, values and learner demographics. Urban Cape Town, with its history of forced segregation and continued inequality, results in these different groups of young

people rarely encountering one another. When meetings do occur, the places that constitute these interactions can be rich sites for learning and transformation, but they also hold the potential for combustible conflict.

### **“There’s actually different standards of ‘Coloured’s’: race talk at Youth Amplified**

The schools which learners attended functioned as markers of social status, however, the young people at Youth Amplified also used other signifiers to reproduce or challenge social hierarchies. ‘Race’ was one such prominent marker of social difference. As indicated by Tracey and Mo earlier, the talk of RGHS learners was littered with references to race. Other young people at Youth Amplified also repeatedly used this concept as the primary marker of difference in descriptions of people, institutions and other aspects of social life. Race talk therefore functioned as a prominent force in constituting the Youth Amplified place, a tool through which the participants made sense of social differences and a central trope around which dialogues and learning played out. As a simple example, one learner remarked after watching the documentary *Testing Hope*, a film which explored inequalities in the South African education system:

*We got to see how different the schools from different races are, ‘Black’ and ‘White’ and all that.*

The phrase “schools from different races” is somewhat confusing, but is in itself an interesting description. It is evident from this expression that places like schools are emphatically racialised in the discourse of youth, such that it almost seems natural that a school would ‘have a race’. Schools were commonly racialised by the learners, depicted as categorically linked to one race, demonstrating how apartheid era school segregation continues to impact on perceptions of important places in the lives of young people. Neighbourhoods and shopping malls are other places that youth racialise, according to qualitative research (Bray et al, 2010). When students from township schools recognise that

their peers attend what they understand to be 'White' schools, this may lead to resentment and, in turn, conflict, in places where dialogic learning interactions may potentially occur. The institutional cultures of some schools and their concomitant colonial discourses of 'Whiteness', as portrayed in the previous section, contribute to the racialisation of schools.

Young people from Rosemary Gardens tended to assume that the schools which they classified as 'White' schools, were, in turn, inhabited by 'White' children. When the BHHS learners joined the group, after only approximately an hour of interactions, Mo proclaimed that he was going to sit with the 'White' children, despite only one of the five BHHS learners later classifying herself as 'White'. This example demonstrates how 'race' does not function in a fixed manner in the talk of young people, simply inherited and reproduced in the same form in which it existed during apartheid. As Bray et al state (2010), 'colour' may not be referring to the hue of a person's skin, but may be used to symbolise style and aspects of youth culture, phenomena that, in the post-apartheid South African context, have become pertinently racialised. Similarly, Dolby's (2001) research illustrates how race as it was understood by the apartheid state as a set of biological, cultural and historical factors, is in fact redefined by globalised, post-apartheid youth in relation to choices, styles and tastes. Youth therefore actively reform meanings attached to race. Mo was therefore aware of certain signifiers, such as the school that these learners attended, the language that they used and their 'style', in the form of clothing and sense of humour, which he expressed in racial terms. This process, of classifying other learners, led to specific attitudes towards these young people and shaped dialogic interactions between students.

The Youth Amplified place therefore confirms some of the findings that researchers have highlighted on youth and race in post-apartheid South Africa, in terms of its prominence as a social category and the fact that youth, as agents, reformulate the meanings attached to this concept. However, the interactions between young people in this place also demonstrated how the students used 'race talk' in order to assign value to particular groups of people, as well as to include and exclude individuals. The following exchange is taken from a live Youth Amplified broadcast:

*Ariel: Ja because there is this thing between 'Coloureds' when you can be light of complexion and people say "no she's not actually 'Coloured' cause look how she looks", so there's actually different standards of 'Coloureds' for me cause I come from Strandfontein and if I step into Hanover park people will say "no she's not 'Coloured'" but I actually am because of my background and heritage and things, their cultural... the way they dress and speak it's almost they say you're not 'Coloured' you're sturvy or something like that...cause of the way you dress and look it's like you trying or pretending to be something you're not. Which is not the case it's just the way you look after yourself.*

*Kelly (hostess): you used the word sturvy and Mo your eyes went so big in your head, so Mo why do you think that something like sturvy...or or better question, what makes a person a 'Coloured', cause Ariel's saying you sturvy..... you saying if you come from Rosemary Gardens you know how to steal and Karen saying that her mommy....economically she's been raised differently because there's more finance...what makes you 'Coloured' in your definition cause clearly you're not sturvy.*

*Mo: 'Coloured', it's funful people*

*Kelly: funfilled how?*

*Mo: like to make jokes, have fun , make a smile, even if there's no food in the house, there's a smile on your face cause we colourful people*

*XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX*

*(approximately one minute later)*

*Themba: I spoke about apartheid and its 17 years after that, why are we still looking at people in terms of colour, why aren't we all human?*

*Group: Mmmmmmm*

*Tracey: I think apartheid had a big role in this cause they made 'Coloured's, so called 'Coloured's and so called 'Blacks' feel inferior, they made us feel small as*



*Letho said, they treated us that way, inferior, ja apartheid is gone we have democracy and everything and still you walking in the street, the so called 'White' people, the so called more richer, more advanced people look down on us cause we were classed as 'Coloured's and 'Blacks', which I think is wrong, why say it's a free country why say it's a 'Coloured' nation, freeworld, when we still get treated the way apartheid used to treat us?*

*Kelly: So we gonna bring it back to the reason we all here, how does racial consciousness, being judged, being small, how does this apply to education, is it the way Tracey says? Do we still have people seen as inferior, looked down upon, is this a democracy and how does that effect us as the youth? I know it's a lot of questions, so ja...*

*Themba: 17 years out of apartheid, but as Tracey says the majority of 'Black' people are still underprivileged and don't have access to education as 'White' people do. We have to classify each other so we give equal opportunities, perhaps give more funding to the 'Black' people than we do to the 'White', however should you say I am 'Coloured' because that person called me 'Coloured', should you act underprivileged because that person called you underprivileged, are you inferior always or just economically inferior? Are you inferior because you have no money?*

*Kelly: I hear a word the word of truth seems to be 'classification' out of your mouth.*

*Ariel: There's only how 'Blacks' and 'Coloured's feel inferior there's no representation of how 'White's' maybe feel inferior, through the empowerment of 'Blacks' and whatever, the enforcement of BEE (Black Economic Empowerment) and all those type of things, someone may feel inferior because "oh my word someone's taking over my business" and because of the apartheid past they might feel something against me because of the colour of my skin. And it's just a mind game to think that people are judging you all the time because of your*

*colour, the people thinking about me differently, now I feel like I'm being judged, it's all up to you.*

*Kelly: So are you saying it comes from part yourself? What do you think Tracey?*

*Tracey: Coming back to what Themba and Ariel said, ja, people feel inferior and that's why I said so called 'Whites' and so called 'Blacks' and so called 'Coloured's, we didn't class ourselves as 'Whites' and 'Blacks' and 'Coloured's, we were called those by other people who were probably passed already. They probably already did their thing and here we are still feeling inferior cause of their doings, I mean 17 years and its even been more than 17 years cause what of the time of apartheid when they started this whole thing, they made us feel inferior and now we suffering, I wasn't even alive when apartheid was there but still I'm suffering, we as the new generation, as tomorrow, we should find a way of changing it even though we didn't start it*

XXXXXXXXXXXXXX

*(approximately one minute later)*

*Themba: I don't let the colour of my skin define me, it plays a role in opportunities. At CIE the 'Coloured's and 'Blacks' click together and we're all children of the CIE, we write the same papers, same teachers, marking criteria the same nothing different. But that's just to a certain individual. I think we should keep the racial classification thing for a government or a university to channel money to people previously disadvantaged. Cause look at the reality, people in Nyanga are suffering, 'Coloured' people are suffering they're not getting the same opportunities as the 'White' people. So its right to classify, but in terms of you yourself it doesn't make it right to classify. Am I making any sense?*

*Kelly: Actually you do. I heard university and classification. Apparently this points system is the new hottest thing.*

*Themba: It's basically the same thing to get the diversity in admission policy. It's a promotion thing for the university to provide equal opportunity. But it actually says*

*in the policy and let me quote (he reads the University of Cape Town equity policy) “the best students are those who despite disadvantage, do well in these exams”. So even though we have these things around, race and stuff, they still expect you to be a student who develops into the best of he or herself.*

In the passage above, three very different notions of ‘Coloured’ identity are observed. These racial constructions have relevance for the kinds of dialogic interactions that play out between the young people. To summarise these three perspectives, Ariel’s position originates from ‘assimilationist aspirations’ and talk of ‘standards’, originating in mid-nineteenth century liberal Cape values. By contrast, Mo produces an essentialised, stereotypical account of ‘Colouredness’ as ‘fun and humorous despite living in poverty’. Finally, Tracey describes a liberatory, deconstructionist narrative of race as historically situated. The young people utilise these constructions of race for different purposes, none of which involve ‘style, choice or taste.’

To expand on these three perspectives, in the first part of the interaction Ariel grapples with her ‘Coloured’ identity and Mo’s utterances, as she analyses the intersection of race and class. She contradictorily dismisses claims that she considers herself superior to families in working-class Hanover Park, while stating that there are “different standards of ‘Coloured’s”, one criteria of which is the manner in which some, like herself, “take care of themselves”. Her stance is somewhat defensive, a response to Mo’s utterance that people are pejorative towards him due to associations with his residential area. Ariel describes interactions with people from a similar, working-class neighbourhood, namely Hanover Park, exchanges in which she feels judged for apparently attempting to attain an illegitimate, elevated status.

This notion of “standards of Coloureds” demonstrates Adhikari’s (2005) assertion that one strand of ‘Colouredness’ has been forged through aspirations to assimilate with ‘Whiteness’ and create distance from the African majority, through liberal or colonial values of ‘self-improvement, civilization and standards’. Although there is no such thing as racial purity, Adhikari (2005) contends that

some 'Coloured' people have, at times, militated against the dominant discourse of 'Coloured' as 'mixed race', through attempts to demonstrate affiliations with markers of 'Whiteness, purity' and, hence, 'higher standards'. This discourse was particularly strong amongst some 'Coloured' people in mid nineteenth century Cape Town (Adhikari, 2005), who aspired to assimilate with 'White' people and is also disseminated by an informal coalition of parents and teachers at former model C schools in the democratic period. It is likely that this discourse of standards is common at schools such as the one that Ariel attends, leading to her transporting it into the Youth Amplified space and fuelling potentially conflict-ridden interactions with peers from RGHS.

In response to Ariel's assimilationist discourse and differentiation of 'Coloured' people through a class-based notion of 'standards', the RGHS students contribute vastly different utterances to the debate on the topic of 'Coloured' identity. Ariel refers to Hanover Park, an area not demographically dissimilar to Rosemary Gardens and describes the ways in which working-class 'Coloured' people in that neighbourhood display particular undesirable behaviours, such as not "taking care of themselves". Such comments are likely to have offended and intimidated the RGHS students. There were a number of occasions at Youth Amplified when more privileged learners or learners attending high status schools made insensitive and derogatory comments, leading to a 'backlash' or aggression from RGHS students, who complained that these learners were "snobs", "fake 'Coloureds'" and other pejorative terms. However, on this occasion Mo reverts to the caricatured stereotype of the 'Coloured' person as the 'laughing coon', the carefree, happy go lucky poor person with a sense of humour, describing 'Coloured' people as "funfilled and colourful". This strategy is a form of conflict aversion, he uses it because he does not want to become embroiled in an argument or be exposed as inferior in class-based or linguistic terms, especially live on air, in English. Ariel's position constitutes an authoritative discourse (Bakhtin, 1981), emanating from colonial racial stratification and Mo is unable or unwilling to engage with this utterance.

Some learners from RGHS were able to move beyond defensive utterances or being silenced, responses that did not lead to dialogic learning, as they replied to

offensive comments from other learners. In the discussion above Tracey proceeds to disentangle race-based self-classification from imposed forms of racial categorisation. She links 'race' to an historical process in the form of apartheid and through the repetitive use of the term 'so called' differentiates between labelling as a way of socially constructing different groups and racial identity as an internalised, subjective process. Elements of double-voicedness are apparent in her endeavours: 'so called' illuminates that others have categorised people in this manner, that she has thought about this form of labelling and incorporated it into the formulation of her own perspective. The use of the term 'so called' consciously demonstrates different voices informing Tracey's thinking and illuminates how she has internalised an understanding of race as historically contingent.

Although at times she struggles to articulate her thoughts, through conceptual engagement and personal reflection Tracey is able to place herself in historical perspective, deconstruct the process of racial classification and be critical of the society in which she lives. There are other examples of double-voicedness in this response, as she plays and experiments with concepts like "democracy", "'Coloured' nation" (alluding to a 'rainbow' nation), "freeworld", with words that are partly hers, partly garnered elsewhere. The internal dialogue that is operating in her consciousness is apparent in the range of terms she uses and with which she struggles to make sense of her thoughts. The dialogic learning process is therefore observed in elements of double-voicedness, as these young people attempted to assimilate concepts and ideas from relevant others, incorporating them into their own discursive repertoires.

Another indication that dialogic learning is taking place is the three occasions where learners refer to the contributions of their peers or fellow participants, by name. Naming other people's perspectives in the dialogue indicates that they have listened to these other positions, pondered their relevance and considered integrating them with their own opinions.

However, there is an even more unambiguous indicator that dialogic learning has taken place in the extract above, linked to the interaction between Themba and

Tracey. Dialogic learning is demonstrated through a change of position, based on a person considering and thinking about other perspectives and then amending their original position. In order for learning to occur it is vital that students actively think for themselves and do not merely report the thoughts of other people (Nystrand, 1997). In the passage Themba, a CIE student, originally states that it has been 17 years since the demise of apartheid and that people continue to think in racial terms, when they should perceive each other simply as “human”. Tracey’s position on the historical process of racial construction then catalyses him to modify his argument. This culminates in a far more nuanced stance on the difference between using historical categories for redress in policy decisions, versus individual racial classification in the school context. It is apparent that Themba has considered his position in the light of other perspectives and developed it to form a more complex, context-specific set of opinions. Through this interchange Tracey and Themba are able to exchange ideas, build upon one another’s perspectives and *co-construct* knowledge. In the earlier, defensive interaction between Ariel and Mo, neither young person engaged with the perspective of the other, as they simply proceeded with their own line of thought.

Double-voicedness, referencing one’s peers and changes of opinion therefore provide clues that on certain occasions learning occurred at Youth Amplified, a place that was heavily constituted through broader societal relations, such as those pertaining to notions of ‘race’. This form of learning involves cooperation, not competition and young people being able to engage with the perspectives of one another, co-constructing knowledge in the process. I would call this dialogic Lived learning, as it is dialogical in nature and constructed out of combinations of Real and Imagined socio-spatial forces that manifested at Youth Amplified. Real space was negotiated by these young people managing to continue attending the radio show, across vast distances and social challenges that hampered their participation. Imagined space was dealt with by making sense of school institutional cultures, the linguistic market and racialised interactions. Through combinations of these Real and Imagined socio-spatial forces, some of the young people managed to produce utterances, as well as learn from one another, demonstrating instances of dialogic Lived learning.

Talk about race therefore involved a process whereby a broad constellation of learner experiences, understandings and attitudes, operating outside of the Youth Amplified environment in homes, schools and communities, were brought into the new Youth Amplified place, as the young people interacted with an extremely diverse group of peers. Spatiality is enmeshed with historical notions of race, that these young people used extensively in order to understand differences between each other and the structure of the society in which they live.

Youth Amplified demonstrates how young people may use historical and contemporary notions of race in different ways, some of which may lead to forms of learning. Work on youth and race in post apartheid South Africa has demonstrated, convincingly, how young people negotiate and transform racial categories through style, music and popular culture (Dolby, 2001). However, 'race talk' amongst youth may have other, less positive effects. Race may be used to demarcate social hierarchies through stating that "standards" exist and that some people "look after themselves better than others". These authoritative, colonial and apartheid era discourses often continue to be utilised at elite schools. Forms of dialogic learning may be possible through young people challenging the historicisation of these categories, as they find ways of creating open, persuasive voices, asking questions and catalysing dialogue. These forms of learning can be as beneficial for students from former model C and other elite schools, as it is for students from township schools. For some Rosemary Gardens youth this kind of dialogue was too intimidating in the Youth Amplified place, live on air, in the presence of peers from more affluent schools who possess access to powerful forms of linguistic capital. However, Tracey illustrates how access to this capital, in the form of English, may lead to forms of dialogic learning, in collaboration with peers from very different backgrounds.

This example of dialogic learning challenges Soudien's (2007) claim that spatial isolation results in township youth being able to understand their immediate environments, but that they struggle to make meaning beyond these spaces or to develop identities that usefully service them outside of these under-resourced areas. He states that township youths' lives are invariably dominated by everyday survival and meeting their own immediate needs, that for most of these young



people “dependence is their key reproductive agency” and their contribution to society is often limited to their survival within it (Soudien, 2007:103). An alternative explanation may be that safe and/or critically oriented places do not exist in which youth can engage with and challenge discourses that transcend their everyday ‘survival’. Forms of critical pedagogy, such as the Youth Amplified, may provide fertile ground for poor youth to engage with the society in which they live, question assumptions and buttress their conceptual development. It may also be that these young people do understand and make meaning beyond the immediate space of the township, but that they often do not have the linguistic capital with which to communicate this understanding to others.

### **“No, it’s not supposed to be like that”: conflict and dialogue at Youth Amplified**

The themes described in the previous two sections were both integral components of conflicts that took place at Youth Amplified during the 18 months that I facilitated the radio show. Conflict can function positively, challenging young people to reassess their positions through introspection and, in turn, stimulating learning. However, it can also lead to individuals being personally attacked through emotional and verbal confrontations.

I would like to describe, in some detail, a conflict that occurred after watching the documentary ‘Afrikaaps’, as this interaction exemplifies and provides further insights into how young people from RGHS engaged in dialogue in this place. *Afrikaaps* is a film based on a Cape Town theatre production that explored the possibility of introducing local, informal, Cape Flats Afrikaans as a medium of instruction at schools. All of the RGHS learners primarily use ‘Afrikaaps’ outside of the school space, unlike the BHHS learners and the CIE students, although learners at these schools certainly use this vernacular sporadically. Lukhanyo High School students speak isiXhosa at home and in their community.



It should be noted that this conflict occurred prior to the BHHS students joining the group and Youth Amplified being broadcast live on air. The clash predominantly involved a CIE learner, Greg, and the two RGHS students, Mo and Tracey, described earlier in this chapter. In this section of transcript we observe how racial identities and the institutional culture of specific schools, the themes of the previous two sections, are core components of dialogue and conflict that took place at Youth Amplified. Here is an excerpt from the recorded discussion that followed the film viewing:

*Tracey: and do you think the president speaks formal each day of his life?*

*Greg: but at formal events he does speak formal right? So look here here's my standpoint right, so you, you people in support of Afrikaaps right, take you you do Afrikaans at school right, that's your medium of...so you say that you understand Afrikaaps and that at school you do Afrikaans and so that's a problem for you cause you have to come and do your subjects in that language, so you sitting with a problem. So you're supporting Afrikaaps yet knowing that it's a problem for you. So why don't you just, so here's the solution then, eradicate Afrikaaps, do the formal Afrikaans as it should be, then you won't have a problem at school.*  
*ALL TALK AT ONCE*

*Tracey: Why don't the teachers come down to my level?*

*Greg: No, it's not supposed to be like that.*

*Tracey: Why don't teachers come, okay they don't even have to come to my level, why don't they just find a slight way of changing how they explain things*

*Greg: That's the problem, you want to lower the standards, the standard has been set and now we want to lower it, it's wrong.*

*Tracey: The thing is (ALL SHOUT AT ONCE) the thing is we are being taught, we have to learn to get to those standards. So they have to come to our standards to bring us up.*

*Mo: But Tracey the teachers do that at our school. Can I tell you this, most of the teachers come from Rosemary Gardens. That's why most of them do that.*

*Tracey: But some of them don't want to know about it*

*Adam: I just want to go back to the issue of standards, Greg do you think that formal Afrikaans is of a higher standard than Afrikaaps?*

*Themba: Precisely, that's what I was asking you, how dare you say that Afrikaaps is of a lower standard than Afrikaans.*

*Adam: One at a time guys, one at a time. Greg how do we set standards in language then?*

*Greg: Oh, standards in language, apparently, okay now according to them Afrikaans is a very difficult medium of instruction and now that's the thing, and then we wanna come and simplify it in the most wrongest way by bringing this slang about, you know, which is wrong. We should be... Afrikaans is the formal language, it's the legal language, it has its own set of grammar and everything of how it should be spoken, now suddenly you want to come and say "no it's a bit too difficult, I understand it better let's make it that way".*

*Amy: But you must speak something which you are difficult, not difficult that you comfortable in.*

*Greg: Then take the challenge and learn Afrikaans then and then it will become much easier.*

*Tracey: Its not that we want the language itself to change, but if the teacher finds a easier way of explaining, then we might learn the language better don't you*

*think? Take maths for instance, your maths teacher always finds some way for the slower child, to catch up. So why can't your language teacher do that? Whats so wrong with that?*

*Greg: So you saying the teacher should use some of your language in between. By explaining and using some of your language in between right? That's what you're saying?*

*Tracey: .....and then give us the real meaning afterwards. Don't you think?*

*Greg: but then that's just gonna, that's just gonna..... prolonging things.*

*Mo: Not prolonging its helping you. It's almost like explaining you how to sulu ...Explaining in your own way*

*Greg: You gonna explain first in Afrikaaps and then in English and you wont get half of the work done.*

*Mo: No it's not like that man.*

**ALL SHOUTING**

*Tracey: Slow and steady wins the race.*

*Greg: Slow and steady might win the race but with this education system we're in now is it time to be slow and steady?*

*Tracey: That's the thing I told you, they're supposed to come down to our level to bring us up to their level. We can't go following people... in the end when we've passed matric and everything but you're still confused about some things.*

*Greg: So what are you doing to get to that level?*

*Tracey: How can we get to that level if we don't really understand?*

*Greg: You can, you just need to start reading...baby Afrikaans.*

*Themba: She's just told us that she doesn't understand which means that there's something to be done. There's an issue and a solution and the only way to solve that issue is for that standard to be brought down*

*Adam: Jerry?*

*Jerry: Sir but then what happens by the time you get to university, its not gonna be the same, the teachers not gonna come down to your level, university's about...they just gonna give you the work and then you expected to understand the work.*

*Greg: So true.*

*Tracey: Exactly so then when you apply...*

*Mo: but that's not what she's saying, she's saying when the teacher explain something, when he explain in Afrikaaps then you say okay and now you understand it better; explain it in your language then you like "I knew that all the time".*

*XXXXXXXXXXXX*

*(two minutes later)*

*Mo: 'Coloured's can act that's why we actors.*

*Greg: No wonder I don't like acting.*

*Tracey: What are you insinuating?*

*Mo: My history teacher says you 'Coloured's are nothing. I ask him now what are you, you also a 'Coloured', then he say ja. I'm just standing up for my rights...He*

*think he something better. You a 'Coloured' you running away in your heart you're actually a 'Coloured'*

*Adam: What is a 'Coloured'?*

*Mo: A 'Coloured's a funful person, likes to make jokes*

*Greg: well if I'm not a ..... then am I not a 'Coloured'? I'm a very very serious person.*

*Tracey: You were cracking jokes.*

*Greg: I was not cracking jokes.*

*Mo: 'Coloured's can act that's why we actors.*

*Greg: no wonder I like acting.*

*Tracey: what are you insinuating?*

*Adam: guys let's keep the debate constructive.*

*Mo: what are you?*

*Greg: I'm a 'Coloured'.*

*Mo: people say 'Coloured's steal, 'Coloured's don't steal they fool you. My friend he's a actor you will believe him, that's why they say 'Coloured' people steal they don't steal man.*

*Themba: I think Greg has spent far too much time at school that has forced him to abandon his colouredness. Cause you actually forced to think of yourself as lower. I'm not actually surprised that his history teacher told him that.*

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Learning at Youth Amplified was mediated by powerful, authoritarian discourses, such as the one related to 'standards', discourses that are used by teachers, parents and students at elite South African schools. These discourses resist forms of dialogic learning that question and deconstruct the historicity of concepts. To emphasise, this discourse of 'standards' that was transported into the Youth Amplified place, originally emerged in the colonial era, when particular cultural practices, norms and values were believed to be superior and of a higher quality, in comparison to others (Adhikari, 2005). In the conversation above Greg introduces this discourse into the Youth Amplified place, describing how 'standards' relate to language, learning, education, and implicitly to notions of race and class. The concept of 'standards' is used by Greg to state that students who usually converse in Afrikaaps need to elevate their linguistic abilities or 'raise their standards' and become fluent in formal Afrikaans, as this language is, in his opinion, the appropriate medium of classroom instruction for learners who speak local dialects of Afrikaans outside of the school. Greg argues that it is the responsibility of the student to attain 'those standards', and learn formal Afrikaans, implying that hard work, perseverance and confidence are the only barriers to individual success. This sentiment is clearly demonstrated by phrases such as "winning the race" and "not prolonging things", terms that corroborate the values of competition, success and individualism that are prominent at the CIE.

The discourse of standards is authoritative, in Bakhtinian terms, as it stands alone as a predefined, a priori truth, proclaiming that such standards exist due to Afrikaans' formal nature and the fact that it is a "legal language with a grammar". The legality of Afrikaans means that it is underpinned by the support of the state and the South African constitution, a centripetal force that results in the language gaining immense power in comparison to Afrikaaps. Yet, the argument that Afrikaans is superior to Afrikaaps because of its social status, legal and constitutional, contains a weak logic: one cannot conclude that a language is inherently superior because it has obtained a superior status. Languages gain status based on political factors, not linguistic ones (Gee, 1996; Mesthrie et al, 2009). The notion that Afrikaans, unlike Afrikaaps, has a grammar, is inaccurate because all languages 'have a grammar' (Gee, 1996).

However, once Greg introduced the authoritative discourse of 'standards', many of the learners comply with the normative dimension of these 'standards' and only contest the manner in which their own standards can be raised. As Tracey said:

*We have to learn to get to those standards. So they have to come to our standards to bring us up.*

In other words, the students do not interrogate the concept of standards; the criteria for 'high standards' are not explored. Instead, the learners debate whether the school system and educators should accommodate these students and their apparently 'sub-standard' linguistic capital. Tracey argues that the most effective way for learners to raise their standards and social status is through the support of educators, who are encouraged, by her, to 'descend' to students' level. This implies that teachers should uplift these young people intellectually and linguistically. The linguistic capital that RGHS learners bring to the formal learning environment of the classroom is assumed to be of an inferior quality in comparison to the language that middle-class learners display at school and educators are not expected to use this rich reservoir of local knowledge in the classroom context because it is perceived to be inferior. When Tracey refers to the "real meaning", she implies that the language which she uses is not real, it is insinuated to be inauthentic and invalid. A large body of research in the United States has refuted this notion of marginalised learners supposedly inadequate and deficient resources. This research has demonstrated how links between the resources learners bring to the classroom and discipline-specific forms of school learning may mutually enhance the education of marginalised and minority youth (Lee, 2007; Moll, Amanti, Neff & Gonzalez, 1992).

Greg's argument is therefore based on an authoritative discourse that states that there are official languages and standards that need to be upheld because they conform to a pre-determined set of conditions. This authoritarian discourse discourages dialogue, as the "standard has been set" and "it's not supposed to be like that that". An authoritative voice is one that we must accept or reject, whereas a persuasive voice is one to which we must answer (Bakhtin, 1981). It is therefore difficult for the other learners to challenge what exactly these standards consist

of, as they are presented as predetermined and unchanging. Despite these difficulties, in response to this authoritative approach, Tracey is able to ask eight questions in total, in the fairly short extract above. Her utterances are based on an internally persuasive discourse through which she stimulates debate and encourages responses to the questions that she is asking.

Greg's authoritarian discourse ultimately produced a 'backlash' from Rosemary Gardens' students, who were insulted by Greg's reference to the inferiority of the language that they speak, further inhibiting the potential for learning to take place on this occasion. The RGHS students led the rest of the group to retaliate towards Greg and his perspective, stating that he has abandoned his 'race', as 'Colouredness' was essentialised as something "in your heart", associated with a set of finite criteria, including the kind of Afrikaans spoken, acting and being humorous. Mo's reference to his history teacher is allegorically directed at Greg, who is proclaimed to be behaving in an illegitimate manner, based on his perspective with regards to Afrikaans and his educational aspirations. Instead of responding to the authoritative discourse of 'standards' by attempting to engage in dialogue and deconstruct the composition of these supposed standards, RGHS learners personally attacked Greg.

After the Afrikaans discussion Greg sheepishly approached me, saying that he "was not trying to be something which he is not". Research has illustrated how township youth who attend model C schools have to negotiate their identities, as they are constantly branded as 'coconuts', 'Black' people accused of pretending to be 'White', or other similarly pejorative terms (Ramphela, 2002). Greg had originally emailed me to say that he was going to be absent during the first two sessions, but that he was very interested in the show. He attended one more show after the Afrikaans conflict and then did not return, even though I telephoned him to say that I valued his presence. When I tried to conduct an individual interview with him at the CIE, he resisted participating in a one-on-one session and I did not persist in trying to interview him. The *Afrikaans* dialogue therefore led to Greg feeling illegitimate and unwelcome in the Youth Amplified place and he withdrew from further participation. Dialogic exchanges in which participants conduct personal attacks on individuals, may therefore prevent



learning from taking place and reduce the potential for such interactions in the future.

Some time after the *Afrikaaps* debate Mo said the following in an individual interview, in reference to the CIE learners:

*Themba he's cool. I like his style. He's down to earth. The others they're 'Coloured's but they're trying to keep them, like 'I don't go to one of this local 'Coloured' schools', we get the same papers but now he wanna be like that guy. That wasn't cool. Why he like that? Cause he think he go to that school his stance more upper than us. I don't worry about him, I know a lot of people like that. They actually nothing. They think they're cleverer than you they speak more English than you. He don't actually know the half of it. He just think he must stick with 'White' people. 'White', 'Black' we all the same, we human being. Same blood, you bleed same as me...*

RGHS students were therefore extremely sensitive to utterances that they perceived as implying that they were inferior to the CIE students and, at a later stage, the BHHS learners. Differences between themselves and other students were often observed through the use of language and the particular schools which students attended. These differences were consistently expressed in racial terms, for example: "he must stick with 'White' people..." These statements illustrate how speaking in a particular manner, employing a discourse of 'standards' and denigrating 'Afrikaaps' were associated with aspirations to assimilate with 'Whiteness', to not attend 'local 'Coloured' schools' and to embrace forms of 'book learning'. Learners from RGHS, like Mo, felt threatened and resentful towards learners from more elite schools and on some occasions attacked them verbally, without rather concentrating on self-reflection and developing their own personal repertoire of concepts, utterances and opinions.

The 'Afrikaaps' dialogue therefore ultimately led to a number of the learners attacking Greg, as he was perceived to be illegitimately seeking upward mobility. In this context the young people involved used constructions of race to discipline and exclude one learner, a reaction which inhibited dialogic learning. This

situation was partially caused by the authoritative, colonial era discourses that have been championed by the current South African education system and the elite school places in which it is imbibed, as some learners attempted to introduce these discourses into the Youth Amplified place. The effects of other school values, such as competition, are also apparent in this discussion. The learners were positioned in opposition to one another in this dialogue, leading to competition, conflict and, ultimately, to Greg's withdrawal.

As a final example of how conflict functioned to limit learning in the Youth Amplified context, appendix I contains a confrontation between a telephone caller who had been listening to a live show in which the Youth Amplified participants had interacted with the junior mayor of Cape Town. The fact that a member of the public took an interest in the show, telephoned the studio and stimulated discussion and debate was not perceived to be a positive phenomenon by the young participants. Instead of acknowledging the caller's perspective and analysing corruption and party politics in South Africa and the dangers thereof, the interaction devolved into a confrontation in which the young people and the caller accused one another of failing to contribute to development and transformation in South Africa. In this context, evaluating the perspectives and arguments being asserted, not the individuals involved, would have been beneficial to the resultant dialogue. However, at school and at home young South Africans are inculcated with values and practices that valorise competition, individualism, excellence and success, meaning that discussions such as this one can easily become a competition in terms of 'who is contributing more to South African society'.

## **Conclusion**

Learning at Youth Amplified was influenced by the norms, values and discourses of participating schools, which traversed with learners into this new place. Particularly prominent in this regard were the powerful school institutional cultures of former model C and other elite schools in South Africa. These places are often

underpinned by authoritative colonial and apartheid era discourses that denigrate marginalised youth and perpetuate values of competition and individualism.

Linked to, but separate from these school cultures is the construct of 'race', which still functions as a 'master trope' for social difference and status amongst South African youth. Race held much potential as a concept of interest to these young people, one that could be used to question social categories and understand the historical context in which they live. However, race was also used in descriptions that reinforce taken for granted categories, as well as mundane places and people that these youth encounter. Racial identifications do not only function to designate different styles and tastes, as other research with youth has found, but they are potent political practices that can serve to exclude or denigrate groups of people. Alternatively, 'race talk' may also be used for emancipatory purposes, for example through historicising racial categories.

Rosemary Gardens' learners were particularly sensitive to comments that they interpreted as demeaning the language that they speak or implying their inferior social status. RGHS learners observed differences between themselves and other youth in the form of spoken language and the particular schools that students attended and these differences were usually expressed in racial terms. One of the challenges at Youth Amplified was to work with the young people towards acknowledging that when other people disagreed with their opinions, this should not necessarily be perceived as a personal attack and that it could be interpreted positively because it meant that discussion was being stimulated. Many of the dialogues that took place were of a highly personal and sensitive nature, involving topics like race, language and intergenerational conflict. This made it challenging for youth to engage with issues conceptually and theoretically, or channel their emotional responses through intellectual and theoretical debate, without simply attacking a person who uttered a remark deemed to be offensive. Forms of critical pedagogy should therefore strive to catalyse a culture in which questioning opinions and interrogating the meaning of concepts are paramount. This may be achieved through promoting forms of internally persuasive discourse and encouraging young people to experiment with forms of double-voicedness.

## **CHAPTER EIGHT**

### **THE CENTRALITY OF LANGUAGE IN PLACES OF LEARNING**

*If you believe that children's language can be "deficient", then you might be tempted to try to improve their language in some way. If you believe on the contrary that the concept of language deficit does not make much sense and that nothing is wrong with the language of any normal child, then you will probably believe that schooling should not interfere with children's dialects. And if you believe that linguistic disadvantage arises largely from people's intolerance and prejudice towards language differences, then you will probably try to change people's attitudes to language.*

Stubbs, 2002: 79

#### **Introduction**

Sociologists of Education have long observed that schooling does not only socialise young people, providing them with equal opportunities, in the process highlighting and rewarding individual talent. Instead, schooling partly 'sorts' students through pinpointing differences, which appear to be individual-level discrepancies, when actually these differences represent, to some degree, structural divisions that operate along the lines of race, class, gender, language and residential area (Apple, 2006; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Gamoran, 2001). Some research indicates that South African schooling reproduces inequalities more consistently than any other studied society (Taylor & Yu, 2009). This is a state of affairs that has benefitted a deracialised middle-class in the post-apartheid period (Chisholm, 2004). Multi-site ethnography holds the potential to be particularly helpful in understanding this 'sorting' process, because

this research method is able to make explicit comparisons between how similar processes play out, in relation to the same or comparable people, in different places. This may illuminate, for example, how students' linguistic capital is received in the school place, versus how young people's utterances are interpreted and used in other educational sites. By contrasting the manner in which schools evaluate young people's resources and talents, in comparison to how these are assessed in other places, insights can be gained into the unique ways in which schools 'sort' students. Studying dialogic learning amongst youth at RGHS, Youth Amplified and the Doodvenootskap, demonstrated the central role that language played in relation to learning and the ranking of students' abilities, in each of these places. The use and evaluation of language was intimately linked to the existence of institutions that were associated with the different places. Institutions either validated or denigrated particular utterances and reinforced or opposed the linguistic market.

### **Institutions and the linguistic market**

The institutions to which people are affiliated, and which they represent, endow them with the right and authority to speak, infusing their utterances with forms of power (Bourdieu, 1991). In other words, institutions authorise people to pronounce sets of words and these words hold power when the people receiving utterances recognise the institutions to which the speaker is attached and, in turn, his or her legitimacy. Silencing, the use of language and dialogic learning, in the three places, were therefore significantly related to the power of those institutions that corroborate and legitimise sets of utterances (Bourdieu, 1991).

At RGHS, the roles that teachers assume and the institutions that they represent, including the school and education department, at times resulted in educators both being silenced and perpetuating learner silence in particular ways. Teachers are mandated by the state to deliver a specified curriculum and to aid students in answering examination questions that test whether learners have 'internalised' this curriculum. On certain occasions teachers' institutional affiliations therefore contributed to learner silence, as students' supposedly 'inferior' utterances were

perceived as an impediment to curriculum delivery, a distraction in what was construed as an already congested system. Learners who attended elite schools, and who represented these schools at Youth Amplified, used discourses that operate within their school institutions, in order to assert their utterances, and the linguistic market, at the radio show. The use of these powerful discourses led, at times, to the silencing of RGHS learners. For example, discourses that pertain to the concept of 'standards' communicated to young people from Rosemary Gardens that the language that they speak is inferior. This worked against these youth engaging in dialogic interactions. Students from elite schools were therefore able to insist on the legitimacy of the linguistic order, as they perceived it, in the 'presence', live on air, of their school institutions. However, off air Greg, for example, was attacked and dismissed.

DVS is 'affiliated' with an alternative set of institutions, including the NGO, CRAAG, and the informal, sub-cultural institution of global and local hip-hop. DVS' relationship to these institutions therefore legitimised their utterances, within an alternative linguistic market that operated in particular contexts. At the meeting at May Hughes's house, the parent School Governing Body representatives did not speak, as they were overwhelmed by the education and linguistic repertoires of others in the room of this 'White' woman's house. However, the young members of the Doodvenootskap spoke at length about their school experiences, in the presence of the school principal and seven doctoral students. The institutional culture that underpins many South African NGOs promotes conversation, voice and participation, a set of practices that the young DVS members learnt through their work with this organisation and which then filtered down to others in their networks. Hoppie told me that:

*These people (CRAAG) have a cool way of doing it. Everyone **votes** collectively. It's **political**. This is my **opinion**, this is your, I think it must be like this, you think it must be like that, come let's **vote**. Big people **decide** it.*

(Translated from the Afrikaans. Words used in English by the interviewee are in **bold**.)

Some South African NGOs therefore demonstrate forms of local democracy, leading to practices that militate against the silencing of young people. These civil society organisations are the product of a mixture of Freirean popular education, faith-based institutions and large amounts of European donor funding, all of which aided in overthrowing apartheid and establishing the democratic South African state (Hendrickse, 2008). The value of liberal, rights-based discourses, propagated by organisations like NGOs, combined with forms of collective mobilisation, such as DVS, has been highlighted more generally in post-colonial contexts like South Africa (Robbins, 2008). By working in collaboration with an organisation like CRAAG, the grassroots social movement of DVS is able to aid in the provision of essential resources for the Rosemary Gardens community. However, more importantly in relation to my research focus, this kind of partnership may develop educational places where young people's voices are supported by democratic institutions, stimulating learning through a range of new concepts, discourses and practices, in the presence of mentors.

DVS is also buttressed by the fact that the group are 'descendants' of a line of Cape Town based hip-hop artists, like Prophets of da City and Black Noise. These groups have created a subaltern counterpublic (Fraser, 1995), debating issues of relevance on their own terms, as they work within the ideological framework of Black Consciousness and promote forms of 'Black' pride. Consider the following lyrics from Brasse vannie Kaap:

They always show ugly pictures of our people  
 Why must I always be a gangster or a coon?  
 Like all that we see in the newspaper or TVs  
 They hold their noses say 'Sis you're a lower-class coloured'  
 Your forefathers were whites and slaves. So it must be a bastard.  
**But, wait a minute, if you trust my story and not his story** you will see  
 My forefathers were **a king and a queen and never knew drugs, guns** or a  
 canteen  
 They were always there to serve god

(Translated from the Afrikaans. English words that were used in the original are in **bold**.)

(Brasse Vannie Kaap in Haupt, 2001: 181)

The alternative linguistic market in which DVS participates is therefore illuminated by the history of the hip-hop sub-culture, both in Cape Town and internationally. In the late 1980s and 1990s Cape Town based groups like Prophets of da City and Black Noise used conscious hip-hop to create Black Nationalist narratives on their own terms, without imitating American hip-hop. These groups used linguistic codes that connected with the daily experiences of young South Africans classified as 'Coloured' and 'Black' by the apartheid state (Haupt, 2001). Cape Town hip-hop groups have therefore used sub-cultural practices, like lyric writing, to reclaim and reinvent local language. This contrasts with the ways in which the school, RGHS, endorsed language that alienated its learners, in the form of standardised Afrikaans. Hip-hop groups have utilised what Brasse Vannie Kaap self-denigratingly call 'gamtaal', as well as non-standard varieties of English, Xhosa and Zulu (Haupt, 2001: 173), distinct from the standard Afrikaans that is used, almost exclusively, by educators at RGHS. DVS' use of language is therefore catalysed by their local and global associations with the sub-culture or institution of hip-hop, differing from the ways in which language was used and endorsed by educators at the school. DVS recreates new forms and mixtures of language, striving to develop esteemed identities, whilst working with a sense of social justice that connects with their worldviews.

DVS therefore operates as a subaltern counterpublic, engaging with a different linguistic market to the one observed at RGHS and Youth Amplified. However, unlike a number of other rap groups in Cape Town, DVS does not subscribe to the politics of Black Consciousness, believing instead in a form of ethnic essentialism, based on their supposed Khoi and San roots. Space does not permit a fuller discussion of this issue, but, for example, one DVS member said



that:

*I found out my great great grandfather was one of the chiefs in the Khoisan clan...Part of our identity, like in our heritage, if you go back into history you will find that our ancestors actually sat around a fire and played a drum, telling their stories of their days and the previous people of their heritage and stuff...*

Another young person who was part of the DVS crew said that:

*I'm not black, I have a very proud Khoisan history.*

Although DVS does not subscribe to the politics of Black Consciousness, the group endorse many of the practices and values associated with Black Consciousness. For example, they encourage pride in a marginalised identity, group solidarity and community development. Importantly, these young men promote an appreciation for their mother-tongue language, in the process dismissing the linguistic market, as it existed at RGHS. Other Cape Town hip-hop crews have displayed similar values. Shaheen, a member of Prophets of da City, remarked:

*When we do interviews and shit like that and we speak gamtaal or whatever, that shit's on purpose so the kid at home can say, 'Fuck they're speaking my language,' you know? They're representing, you know, what comes out of the township and shit. So if some middle-class motherfucker comes 'Oe god, skollietaal' ('Oh god hooligan language'), the shit's not for them, you know what I mean? I don't care if some white-ass dude at home thinks, 'Oh shit look at this...uncultured', you know? I want some kid from the ghetto to think, 'Naa, we can relate to that'.*

(Quoted in Haupt, 2001: 178).

This comment demonstrates attempts to utilise centrifugal language forces from below, in order to create an alternative linguistic market, one that rejects the 'standards' of middle-class, often 'White' youth and, for example, former model C schools. This kind of youth development work is buttressed by the Black Consciousness values of spiritual and intellectual upliftment, represented in hip-hop terms by the phrase 'knowledge of self', or as the DVS crew said, becoming

‘more conscious’.

DVS do not write lyrics that directly confront the issue of the status of the language that they speak, as groups like Prophets of da City and Brasse vannie Kaap (BVK) have done in the past. These other groups used their linguistic constructions as a means self-consciously to reclaim the language that working-class ‘Coloured’ people use. DVS simply write in the same language that they use for verbal communication, switching between English and Afrikaans, asserting and legitimising their linguistic constructions in the process. Their practices therefore demonstrate parallels to the work of Prophets of da City and Brasse vannie Kaap, as they strive to promote creativity and enhanced self-esteem amongst youth in Rosemary Gardens. Like Prophets of da City and Brasse vannie Kaap, DVS attempt to recreate positive ‘Black’ and ‘Coloured’ subjectivities that subvert popular stereotypes and negative depictions of young people formerly classified as ‘Black’ and ‘Coloured’. These groups, which form a cultural movement and subaltern counterpublic, demonstrate strong allegiance to the communities in which they were reared, as illustrated by Shaheen’s attempts to connect with township youth (see quotation above). These actions stimulate forms of solidarity, as groups work to remake esteemed identities with young people.

Endorsing an alternative linguistic market can therefore encourage youth voice and stimulate dialogic interactions. However, such sentiments and practices can also lead to forms of racial essentialism and authoritative notions of, for example, ‘Blackness’ that inhibit dialogue and understandings of the multiplicity of history. Haupt (2008) states that some of the lyrics of groups like Prophets of da City portray elements of an ‘Africentric Black nationalist illusion’, hinting that ‘Black’ people were united prior to colonialism. This position negates some of the complexities of the histories of slave peoples in Cape Town and the birth of new forms of identity that emerged in the colonial encounter, and which created complex creole identities (Erasmus, 2001).

This kind of ‘racialised nationalism’ may have dangerous consequences, as it displays overlaps with the ideological underpinnings of the popular and

charismatic Julius Malema<sup>10</sup> and his Economic Freedom Fighters, in South Africa. This is not to say that the politics of, for example, Prophets of da City, DVS and Julius Malema are synonymous, or that I am dismissing projects that contain local manifestations of Black Consciousness. It is to warn against solutions that use promises of overturning oppression, defined in essentialised racial terms, as the clarion call to new regimes that materially benefit an elite few, whilst these social movements concurrently repress dissent and dialogue. As Paulo Freire (1970) said, notwithstanding his somewhat problematic binary between oppressors and the oppressed, all parties need to engage in dialogue that develops self and historical consciousness, lest the oppressed become the new oppressors. At times, DVS displayed monological, authoritative and essentialist tendencies, militating against multiple interpretations of history and the divided and changing nature of identities. For example, their belief that the group's roots are linked to the Khoi and San, comprise essentialistic, master-narratives of their supposed origins and do not necessarily promote dialogue in relation to these issues.

Despite these shortcomings, some Cape Town hip-hop crews, like DVS, have impressively disrupted taken for granted assumptions related to language and shifted the linguistic market. These groups demonstrate how languages are heteroglot products, forged through combinations of tongues from the past and present, emanating from different sectors of society and a range of cultural sources. There are probably few more overt examples of heteroglossia than Kaapse Afrikaans, which was formed in the colonial experience between the 'tongues' of Dutch and British settlers, Khoi and San peoples that were already at the Cape and the range of South and East Indian, as well as East African slaves that were brought to this colony. These heteroglot influences have resulted in an extremely creative linguistic mix that McCormick (2002) calls the language of "love and war", due to the emotive and expressive character of this language. It is this informal variety of the Afrikaans language that most of the young people in

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<sup>10</sup> 33 year old Julius Malema leads the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), a South African political movement which he founded in 2013, following his expulsion from the African National Congress. In the 2014 general election the EFF garnered the third largest number of votes. The EFF proposes to expropriate land "stolen by 'Whites' from 'Blacks'" and nationalize the mining and banking sectors ([www.efffighters.org.za](http://www.efffighters.org.za)). Malema is a former president of the African National Congress Youth League and was convicted of hate speech in 2010 and again in 2011.

this study utilise. They regularly code-switch between informal English and Afrikaans, language and practices that they have inherited from the Cape Town underclasses, slavery and the segregation of people by race, place and status.

At RGHS young people, who have inherited this complex tapestry of languages, that overlaps with the history of the Cape, learn that the language that they speak is 'lower', 'not proper', 'a mixture' and that they ought to speak a different version of the Afrikaans language at school. Educators confirmed that they believe that the language that learners bring to school is of a lower quality than the medium of instruction that students are expected to use in classrooms. Fataar & Du Plooy (2012) found similar attitudes from school personnel towards learners, stating that schools 'lamine' or suppress aspects of young people's identities and the resources to which they have access, with repercussions for how young people engage with learning, in these places. This 'lamination' or denigration of young people's language may be why Swartz (2009) found that Cape Town township youth seemed to be much more curious, willing and able to converse outside of the classroom context, in comparison to inside the classroom, and many lacked the mental and emotional stamina to remain engaged at school.

The language that young people from Rosemary Gardens used at Youth Amplified was generally depreciated by their peers. The manner in which the group assessed language, in this place, was linked to the mixture of schools that attended the show. Particularly, the institutional practices and culture of the elite schools, namely the Cape Institute of Education and Barry Hertzog High School, had a profound influence on the group. Learners from these schools often 'laid down the linguistic market prices', stating that 'standards exist' and that it is the responsibility of RGHS learners to 'raise' their forms of linguistic capital and acquire these 'standards'. This discourse of standards circulates amongst educators and learners at former model C and other elite schools, functioning to denigrate the language and culture of marginalised Capetonian youth. Learners who attended these schools transported this discourse into the Youth Amplified place. This led to students contesting the process of how 'standards' may be acquired, following their viewing of the Afrikaans documentary and not debating whether or not 'standards' exist. The discourse of 'standards' is inherited from the

colonial and apartheid eras and operates in an exclusionary manner, through contemporary education institutions, militating against linguistic diversity. It functions authoritatively, proclaiming a taken for granted set of truths.

In contravention to this notion of 'standards', socio-linguists argue that the idea that some languages are more sophisticated or superior, in comparison to others, is a myth, as languages become standardised due to political and not linguistic factors (Mesthrie et al, 2009). The state standardises, endorses and legally validates certain versions of language, rather than others, because of political dynamics. Stating that some varieties of a language are superior to others, or that some languages are 'primitive', is therefore clearly flawed. What is actually meant when people say that a portion of language is 'incorrect' or of a low standard, is usually that the language has been used inappropriately, relative to the social context (Stubbs, 2002). Language develops norms and values regarding its use at, for example, schools, in job interviews or in pubs and it may be used in ways that are generally considered to be inappropriate in specific places.

The difference between norms that pertain to language use at home, versus the ways in which language is expected to be used at school, is brilliantly portrayed in Shirley Brice Heath's (1983) classic study of two parallel communities, which she calls Roadville and Trackton, in South Dakota. Heath found that middle-class, 'White' parents in Roadville read stories to their children, regularly, and combined these activities with discussions involving the events depicted in the books. At school these children were prepared for the questions and tasks set by teachers, in the classroom (Heath, 1983). Also in Roadville, working-class 'White' parents read 'to' their children, not 'with' their children. Reading therefore comprised a passive activity for the young people, leaving them unprepared for classroom-based literacy practices. Working-class 'Black' parents did not dedicate time to literacy events with their offspring, but valued storytelling and encouraged children to express their opinions and to speak publicly (Heath, 1983). Educators were overwhelmed by the outspokenness of these young people when they participated in classrooms and educators felt that these actions threatened their classroom control. These different groups' language practices, which they utilised at home, therefore prepared their

children for school in different ways

Norms and expectations, as they pertain to language use, may work in different directions (Stubbs, 2002), as people may be judged as being inferior due to their use of language or, alternatively, people may be branded as 'snobs' or 'coconuts', accused of trying to demonstrate that they are superior, due to their speaking in certain ways, in places like the townships.

The language that most young people from Rosemary Gardens learn at home is judged to be 'inappropriate' at school, because the more sufficiently middle-class, historically 'White' Afrikaner version of the Afrikaans language became the variety that informs the South African school curriculum. This version of the language differs considerably from the variety that most Rosemary Gardens children and youth speak at home. Schools are state sponsored and administered institutions that have historically operated as a centrifugal force from above, resisting changes to language and local deviations to standardised forms, hence the rejection of Kaapse Afrikaans. Bourdieu (1991) states that the more formal a situation, the more officially accepted forms of linguistic competence are asserted, as formal situations impose that subjects acknowledge the relative 'value' of different 'products in the linguistic market' (Bourdieu, 1991). This is partly due to the fact that formal situations are generally linked to institutions. In the case of classrooms, these formal learning places are linked to the institution of the school and the auspices of the state. RGHS therefore affirms a variety of Afrikaans that is unfamiliar to the young people who attend this school, due to its institutional affiliations.

Asserting local forms of language promotes confidence and a sense of pride, as demonstrated by hip-hop groups like DVS. However, speaking and using these varieties of language needs to be supplemented with learning standardised forms of language that hold power in places like universities and employment settings, as the dominant linguistic market will continue to operate and impact on the lives of these young people. Local, peripheral normativities may stimulate linguistic creativity, but they will be regarded as inferior by institutions at the 'centre' and

may ultimately function to reproduce social inequalities, unless they are developed in tandem with powerful linguistic resources (Blommaert, Muyliaert, Huysmans, & Dyers, 2005). It is therefore in the interests of young people that they be made aware of social evaluations, with regard to the use of language, as DVS' forms of creativity may not be interpreted as such in other places, such as formal education institutions and various work settings. If young people have ambitions to participate in tertiary education institutions, and employment positions, it is important for them to learn about the codes and concepts that operate in those places. As Bourdieu (1993) says in relation to the rebellious teacher who simply treats all language as equal,

*“he will never be able to create an empire within an empire, a sub-space in which the laws of the dominant market are suspended”* (Bourdieu, 1993: 63).

Although hip-hop culture has not created “an empire within an empire”, it has, to some degree, interrogated and reversed the laws of the dominant linguistic market (Alim, 2009). Hip-hop is the largest youth sub-culture globally and although all of its many varieties do not engage with politics and critical thinking, this sub-culture integrally involves youth experimenting with, and asserting, new forms of language (Alim, 2009). Hip-hop ciphers, the human circles in which lyrics are ‘spat’ and ‘battles fought’, have become cross-national places where linguistic identities and ideologies are produced and contested, where language is altered and recreated (Alim, 2009).

To sum up, the impact of institutions and the linguistic market, on dialogic learning amongst young people from Rosemary Gardens, differed in the three places, as did the responses to these institutions, from youth. School discontinuation comprises a rebuttal from marginalised young people, dismissing the legitimacy of educators and the school as an institution. The silence of Rosemary Gardens youth through school discontinuation therefore represents a mutual abandonment between themselves and the new and old South African states. This silence is caused by distrust, disrespect and displacement, a vote against the legitimacy of the school, an institution that is unable meaningfully to engage with the social challenges these youth experience or the language that they utilise. In response to young people from elite schools demarcating the linguistic market at Youth



Amplified, youth from RGHS attacked students who attended the CIE and BHHS, calling them “fake coloureds” and “snobs”. In an individual interview with Tracey she repeatedly called Greg a “girl”. These types of responses, whereby township youth attacked their more well-off peers, have been widely documented in South Africa. The challenge at Youth Amplified was therefore to create a situation where the young people could cooperate and not compete and ultimately produce a show of which they could all be proud. This was further complicated by the culture of competition that was observed amongst learners from the more elite schools. The dual challenges of promoting a sensibility for the ways in which history has resulted in certain inequalities, as well as encouraging youth to reflect on themselves and the conceptual issues at hand, rather than attacking peers deemed to be offensive, made working with the Youth Amplified group a huge challenge. Finally, DVS’ relationships to the institution of CRAAG and Cape Town hip-hop culture provided them with certain legitimacy in particular contexts, facilitating their ability to speak in these places.

### **Language and social hierarchies**

The institutions associated with learning places shaped the social hierarchies that existed in each of the places and, in turn, the kinds of dialogic interactions that emerged. DVS members’ descriptions of dialogic learning at school, versus similar depictions of learning amongst the Doodvenootskap, illuminated the social hierarchies that existed, the power relations at play and the language that was used in each of these places. Relationships amongst DVS members were portrayed as non-hierarchical in nature, whereas tiered relationships, between powerful educators and silenced learners, apparently occurred at school:

*Learning is different at school. The way the teacher explain something its proper, like the way you get it written in the textbook. Like at school it's straight learning, it's serious from the start of the period till the end....Hoppie will talk about a light bulb. A teacher will explain it. Hoppie will come and say, jy weet mos na, gaan slap, sit die lug af (you know, you go to sleep, turn the light off). That's when you take the lightbulb out. A teacher will tell you switch off the light when you take the*



*bulb out. But then Hoppie comes and this is what we like hearing man, we like hearing at home, understand? Like hoppie will do or the guys at home will do, when we want to learn something like they will always bring the way we do things at home in. Now at school it's not always that way. So at school pure English, not pure English but English all the way man...Hoppie will maybe stand on a cupboard and take out the light there in front of you, whereas at school they will explain it to you they will show you a picture, if they must show you how a pavement look, at home Hoppie will point to a pavement, say that's what I'm talking about that specific part do you understand and he'll crack a joke about it and learning must be fun man, you draw everyone's attention they wanna hear, then they running to the front.*

Hierarchical relations, at school, are created through the predominance of authoritative discourses and centripetal language forces that operate in that place. School learning was described as “proper, like the way you get it written in a textbook”, demonstrating how this pedagogical interaction represents an unchangeable, authoritative discourse, as students struggle to interact with this form of knowledge or develop their own opinions and ideas in relation to its objects (Bakhtin, 1981). Learning in the school place is therefore associated with the high-status, centripetal English language, a serious atmosphere and the use of textbooks. English has colonial connotations and is regularly regarded as ‘the language of the oppressor’, a language in relation to which learners often feel uncomfortable, unfamiliar and inadequate.

The structure of verbal interactions that emerged in the school place is portrayed as markedly different to exchanges at DVS. Whereas the teacher **explains to** the learners, according to Aaron, Hoppie **talks with** the students, illustrating the difference between the authoritative discourse of the school and the internally persuasive discourse of Hoppie and DVS (Bakhtin, 1981). “Explaining to” a person implies that a hierarchy exists between the knowledgeable person who is explaining to an uninformed individual. By contrast, “talks with”, insinuates that learning, in this context, is a collective exercise based on forms of equality, where knowledge is shared in a reciprocal manner.

The equality experienced amongst DVS members was described as catalysing more relaxed verbal interactions, allowing for a range of different opinions to emerge. Aaron says that “at home Hoppie will point to a pavement”, creating Imagined affinity between DVS as a place and ‘home’. DVS is therefore portrayed as a comfortable place that is linked to the use of humour, contributing to these young people’s perceptions of the difference between school and DVS. The school is not associated with “cracking jokes”, but with being “serious”. Other differences include the language of instruction and the actions and tools used to perform pedagogy. The construction of the DVS place therefore involved contrasting it with the rigid, formal space of the school, with DVS being described as an unthreatening place, similar to the home environment. School-based linguistic exchanges, between educators and learners, were therefore described as comprising a hierarchy between dominant educators and marginalised students, whereas interactions between members of the DVS crew were portrayed as more sufficiently egalitarian.

The social hierarchies that existed in these places, and which were observed in relation to the ways in which language was used, influenced knowledge production in the different sites:

*A big thing at the school is that the misters/sirs don't kick off on the youngsters level. There's always that “I am the **adult** you are the **learner**.” I am right you are wrong. If you say “does sir know that Jan van Riebeek isn't the man in the portrait”, then the sir is going to fight with him. In the sir's book it isn't so. His **research** and his **intelligence** which he learns in other places is on a different **level**. “I am the sir, **studied** for 30 years to be the sir. Everything that you say doesn't matter.” So he can **challenge** the sir on certain aspects but the sir isn't going to give him **credit** for that. Because there's only one way in the sir or madam's **mind**. I am the **adult**. You the **child**. And that ties into my work. We don't want to **permanently** make decisions for the youth. We teach the youth that their voices have weight. Their opinions count. They can be part of the **decision-making**. These people have a cool way of doing it. Everyone **votes** collectively. It's **political**. This is my **opinion**, this is your, I think it must be like this you think it must be like that, come let's **vote**. Big people **decide** it.*

(Translated from the Afrikaans. English words used by the interviewee in the original in **bold**. Hoppie originally used the word “meneer”, which I have translated as “sir”, but could also be understood as “mister”).

According to DVS members a ‘hierarchy of knowledges’ existed at school, as educators’ knowledge apparently acquired greater value than the knowledge of students, in the school context. Hoppie’s comment regarding educators acquiring their knowledge in a different place demonstrates the suspicion that young people in neighbourhoods like Rosemary Gardens feel towards institutions of higher education and the resentment they harbour towards knowledge gleaned in those places. The school is imagined to be a place that is linked to other elitist institutions of higher learning, places that are unfamiliar to most Rosemary Gardens youth. Teachers’ knowledge comprises an authoritative discourse (Bhaktin, 1981), accessed in a different place, which functions as the ultimate source of power in the classroom context. Hoppie therefore describes how a hierarchy exists between the knowledge of learners and educators, diminishing possibilities for dialogic interactions. This kind of interaction is contrasted with dialogue in the DVS place, where a range of opinions apparently existed and are respected.

Hoppie’s reference to Jan van Riebeeck, the Dutchman who led the colonisation project at the Cape, hints at further resistance to, and suspicion of, the kinds of interactions that occur at school. As a means of contextualising this reference, I first heard DVS members mention Jan van Riebeeck at a ‘coffee bar’ evening that the group organised for young people from Rosemary Gardens to meet and engage in discussions on the topic of ‘identity’. A guest speaker called Bradlocks stated that no genuine portrait of van Riebeeck exists; the two images commonly referred to- one on old South African bank notes and the other housed in the National gallery- comprise images of an unknown person, according to Bradlocks.

It is interesting that Hoppie utilises this example as evidence of educators’ rejection of students’ knowledge. Jan van Riebeeck is commonly referred to as the

symbolic father of 'Coloured' people, having supposedly procreated with Khoi/San slaves to produce the 'Coloured race' (Adhikari, 2009). By stating that nobody has actually seen van Riebeeck's face and that educators would deny this fact, Hoppie is contesting the colonial narrative of racial construction and implying that educators and the education system collude with that narrative. School knowledge is therefore associated with the colonial project and the indoctrination and subjugation that were integral to its existence. Simultaneously, students' knowledge is silenced at school and an alternative interpretation of these young people's origins and the 'face' of their paternity, is rejected. Thus, Hoppie implies that the school system does not provide youth with an opportunity to explore and develop their identities or take ownership of forms of knowledge linked to their heritage. School was portrayed as a place based on inequalities and a strict hierarchy in terms of opportunities to speak, the kind of language endorsed in this place and the processes of knowledge production that exists between educators and students. This was contrasted with similar processes that occur amongst the DVS crew.

The power relations and social hierarchies that existed at Youth Amplified have already been described as contingent to the school institutions to which students were affiliated and the young people's use of language in this place. These power relations and social hierarchies were continually contested by the young people and were influenced by the mix of learners that were present at the radio show. Social stratification, linked to the schools that students attended, resulted in learners from elite schools asserting the linguistic market, while RGHS learners opposed this state of affairs, often proclaiming that these young people were illegitimately seeking upward social mobility.

This jostling for position in the social and linguistic hierarchy, amongst peers, could possibly be alleviated in informal learning contexts by encouraging forms of cooperation between diverse groups of young people, such that they, for example, translate utterances for one another. All of the young people at the show could speak more than one language, providing an abundance of available linguistic resources. A component of the critical pedagogical process at Youth Amplified therefore involved the students and myself learning to engage in forms

of cooperation, instead of competing. This meant working with youth to reflect on instinctive reactions and strive for mediated responses that promoted internally persuasive discourses and dialogue. Reflecting with youth on the perspectives being presented and exploring what the deeper underlying questions and issues consisted of, behind what manifested in a particular conversation, were important to these endeavours (Chavez & Soep, 2005). Debates could then become interactive conceptual discussions, instead of 'circumstantial scuffles'. The value of debriefing and reflecting, after the show, were vital practices that helped the young people explore verbal interactions.

The three places therefore demonstrated that hierarchical, unequal relationships do not generally stimulate rich dialogical interactions and often function to silence individuals. These hierarchies were produced through the use of language and the ways in which different forms of knowledge were validated in the three places. The nature of young people's interactions with each other, specifically, whether they competed or cooperated, also shaped whether or not such interactions were hierarchical. Interactions influence the kinds of speech genres that emerge in educational places, the topic of the next section.

### **Speech genres**

Institutional validation for different varieties and uses of language, as well as the existence of social hierarchies, leads to the emergence of 'speech genres'.

Speech genres represent the manner in which utterances are arranged into a fixed configuration that are repeated and become recognisable over time, impacting on dialogic learning.

My observations of classroom-based interactions at RGHS led me to conclude that the hierarchy between learners and educators, alluded to by DVS members, is maintained by a speech genre known as Information Response and Feedback (IRF). IRF type classroom dialogues are the result of the practical difficulties induced by teachers' roles as social agents designated to disseminate cultural knowledge and practices, with limited resources and large class sizes (Edwards &

Mercer, 1987; Edwards & Furlong, 1978). The fact that RGHS classrooms involve interactions between an adult and a group of young people, versus the peer-group relations that occurred amongst DVS and Youth Amplified, also inhibited forms of dialogue and led to hierarchical interactions. Furthermore, the social challenges which affect learners in the Rosemary Gardens community, result in educators believing that these learners are volatile, with a predictable IRF type interaction allowing teachers to maintain control. Teachers questioned the ethical underpinnings of Rosemary Gardens youth's socialisation, with interactions that follow a rigid format allowing educators to prevent young people, who teachers believe possess 'unethical tendencies', from hijacking discussions for their own ends. In addition, IRF type interactions provide teachers with a framework to ensure that learners receive forms of language to which they have not, in the view of educators, previously been exposed. At RGHS it was therefore apparent that IRF comprises a particular classroom-based speech genre that allows educators to shape the kinds of utterances, content, styles of speech and intentionality of both learners and educators (Gardiner, 1992).

A different speech genre emerged at Youth Amplified, one that was highly conducive to the production of dialogue, in addition to the production of radio. Dialogic learning interventions at schools require thorough training programmes where educators and learners are exposed to the dialogic process after being introduced to a set of ground rules (see Dawes, Mercer & Wegerif, 2004; Mercer, 2002; 2005; Rojas-Drummond & Mercer, 2004). However, the form of a talk radio show is naturally oriented towards the facilitation of dialogue: a host or presenter controls the flow of talk, seeking out multiple perspectives and learners have to wait their turn in order to contribute, because interrupting one another prevents the audience from following the conversation. Learners hosting the show themselves enhanced this non-hierarchical, youth-led forum. Preparation for the show and the generation of questions improved the dialogues that emerged. The format and structure of a youth radio show can therefore be an ideal medium for the production and demonstration of dialogic learning amongst youth.

Youth Amplified involved myself and the young people learning about this genre, exploring a different set of 'rules of the game' and trying to stimulate dialogue

through diverse opinions, critical thinking and asking pertinent questions. I learnt about different people's roles and responsibilities as the process unfolded. The particular roles that the young people were required to perform challenged them, as they needed to reflect on their instinctive responses and think about how to react, in order to make an effective contribution to the discussion. Students from all of the participating schools struggled to embrace this speech genre that comprised of a new set of practices and values, at Youth Amplified, as this kind of interaction is not commonly encountered or performed in other places through which South African youth move.

For RGHS learners this place presented considerable challenges. These young people are reared in circumstances dominated by violence and their relationships with educators and other Rosemary Gardens residents are often antagonistic. They expressed resentment towards peers with greater privileges and were sceptical of a system that is understood to operate unfairly. These circumstances meant that it was difficult to facilitate situations in which RGHS youth felt comfortable and unthreatened, such that they could openly engage in the speech genre of talk radio, without being silenced or attacking people that presented perspectives that appeared to be threatening or insulting. The regular conflict and hierarchy that characterises social relations in the other places through which these youth move, at times led to the young people recreating combative relationships at Youth Amplified, working against forms of dialogic learning.

Youth Amplified also demonstrated how speech genres that emerge in informal learning contexts, dialogic exchanges that involve youth engaging with issues related to social justice, could differ from how these kinds of talk have been conceptualised as ideally existing in classrooms. Research has shown that dialogue can be most useful for classroom learning when young people are encouraged to conduct 'exploratory talk', a speech genre that is underpinned by the principals of the 'ideal speech situation' (Wegerif, 2005, 2008; Habermas, 1990). Exploratory talk promotes rational debate and seeks to attain a range of opinions that interact as the discussion unfolds. Mercer (2005) and his colleagues have constructed 'talk lessons' programmes with educators and learners. These programmes develop fuller participation from students and encourage children



and youth to give reasons for their views, as they critically but constructively engage with the opinions of others. However, these exploratory talk programmes repress personal identities and other factors that may hamper the operations of 'rationalism' (Wegerif & Mercer, 1997). Exploratory talk encourages participants to reach consensus, rationally, through the group agreeing on and collectively pursuing what it considers to be the 'best ideas'. This form of engagement is suited to the context of, for example, classroom based mathematics, science or geography lessons. However, in informal educational contexts in which young people debate issues of intense personal and social relevance, where pertinent historical power relations are at play, the ideal speech situation is neither possible nor desirable. When young people engage with issues related to notions of social justice, the different perspectives presented are contingent on the identities of the speakers and the historical position of different groups. These identities and positions need to become conscious and integral components of the speech genres that are produced, otherwise a range of underlying issues, related to, for example, race, class and gender, will impact, unconsciously, on the ensuing dialogues, but these will not be acknowledged.

In this type of informal learning context, young people therefore need to be encouraged to reflect on the social position from which they speak, something that will affect the speech genre that emerges. Reflection enhances dialogic interactions as it increases people's awareness of their own perspectives and helps them to understand these in relation to their social position and the historical context. Dialogue in this situation does not simply involve the most rationally sound argument 'winning', but requires that people interpret different standpoints in relation to the social identities of the speakers. Whilst scholars that advocate for exploratory talk propose that rational debate and decision-making amongst equal parties benefits 'the common good', different groups of people have had different historical experiences and have not previously had equal access to 'the common good'. Dialogue that involves engaging with issues that are related to forms of social justice, therefore requires that participants be aware of the historical context in which dialogue plays out and the ways in which different groups of people have been treated by each other in the past. Historical



consciousness and social reflexivity may then produce a speech genre that is 'critical' in its orientation and not merely 'rational'.

Speech genres are therefore particular place-based configurations of utterances that inhibit or enhance dialogic learning. Dialogue in classrooms at RGHS was dominated by a speech genre known as Information Response and Feedback that allowed educators to maintain control in the context of threatening external forces, large class sizes and pressure to conform to bureaucratic stipulations. Institutional prescriptions, hierarchical relationships and uneven power relations therefore led to rigid verbal interactions, inhibiting the emergence of dialogue at RGHS. While it may be important to disseminate empowering concepts and discourses to youth, this needs to be combined with allowing young people opportunities to explore forms of knowledge in ways that enable their agency. By contrast with the school place, the Doodvenootskap demonstrated verbal exchanges based on equality, allowing members of this 'subaltern counterpublic' to discuss issues on their own terms. This led to forms of speech that promoted youth voice and young people using language that they experienced as comfortable. Informal learning places, such as Youth Amplified, that engage with social and historical issues are not completely compatible with a speech genre that educationalists have called 'exploratory talk'. These kinds of places need to encourage young people to reflect on their positionality, as well as contingent historical power relations. Introspection and personal positioning should be able to be included in the kind of speech that emerges, not repressed in order to promote 'rationalism'. Reflection catalyses young people to analyse their own perspectives, in relation to other positions and the historical context, something which bolsters dialogic interactions and may produce forms of 'critical' speech.

### **Learning about concepts**

The ways in which language produced and reproduced power relations between people, the institutions associated with particular learning places and the speech genres that operated in the different places, all influenced how young people from Rosemary Gardens learnt about concepts. Conceptual learning differed

depending on whether concepts were being questioned, deconstructed and analysed dialogically, or whether accepting the meaning of concepts was authoritative.

At RGHS, the elite forms of Afrikaans that were dispersed to students through Initiation Response and Feedback type interactions and dictations produced a particular kind of conceptual learning. For example, in consumer studies the concept “diabetes” was simply disseminated to these young people and they were forced to absorb it in language that they considered to be of a “higher standard” and somewhat alien. Rote learning of this nature was common at RGHS.

When Mr Williams explained the concept of “ambivalence” to his English class, he did so humorously, but he did not ask the class for examples of ambivalence from their own lives. Asking the class to supply examples of this concept could have enabled him to gauge their understandings of this term, using words that were meaningful to these young people. It would then have been possible to explore how the ‘horizon’ (Gadamer, 1975) of the poem *Memento* could be fused with the cultural reference points that form these young people’s ‘horizons’ of understanding. Mr Williams may argue that insufficient time exists for such deliberation. He is required to teach the poem such that the learners are able to produce answers to questions regarding this text, when they write their examinations. However, by simply making the poem ‘digestible with humour’, the learners do not relate the concepts in this text to meaningful phenomena in their own lives or explore different meanings of these terms and the poem as a whole. Educators’ performance is largely assessed through students’ examination scores. Their primary objective is therefore to ensure that learners can provide answers that correspond to the examination questions that await them. However, the fact that the questions and answers are predetermined by the curriculum does not allow learners to explore and discover idiosyncratic meanings in relation to these concepts. Curriculum delivery, evaluation and other bureaucratic processes therefore shaped the teaching and learning of concepts at RGHS.

The Doodvenootskap gleaned concepts from CRAAG and hip-hop culture and used these linguistic resources for different purposes depending on their

audience. Concepts such as ‘freedom of speech’ and ‘conscious’ lyrics were therefore learnt in conversation with other groups or through sub-cultural activities. At times such concepts were reflected upon and developed, as DVS observed how these terms were used in different contexts. On other occasions these concepts were learnt in rote fashion and repeated to people like myself. The role of older mentors, like Dylan, who are able to ask pertinent questions and challenge these young people’s understandings, played an invaluable role in their conceptual development.

DVS members questioned which criteria were integral to a high quality, ‘conscious’ lyric, as they engaged with this and other concepts through their hip-hop activities. Some of the core practices of conscious hip-hop therefore involve conceptual exploration. Conscious hip-hop advocates that a ‘good’ lyric does not solely function propagandistically, attempting to influence people’s opinions, but is used to raise conceptual questions, for example in relation to racialised identities for youth. ‘Conscious lyrics’ are therefore able to question the meaning of concepts and demonstrate a range of different understandings of these terms. The lyrics of Cape Town based groups like Prophets of da City and Brasse vannie Kaap clearly engaged in a rhetoric of questioning and of deconstructing the meaning of concepts. At times DVS members like Ssslang interrogated concepts like ‘standards’, ‘charity’ and ‘Skollyhood’, through their lyrics. On other occasions linguistic constructions were used to illustrate supposed creativity, in the form of, for example, what DVS called ‘punch lines’. However, examination of punch lines like “*daar loop bene af van Sullivan*” (*over there Bones walks away from Sullivan*) illustrated that these figures of speech simply asserted an utterance that did not invite a dialogical response or develop these young men’s conceptual understanding.

At Youth Amplified the young people were able to learn most effectively, in relation to concepts like ‘race’ and ‘inequality’, when they cooperated with their peers, working together to share perspectives and, simultaneously, develop their own standpoints. For example, Themba refined his position on ‘racial classification’ such that he could differentiate between ‘classification’ for redress versus ‘classification’ as it is used to categorise people individually. This

conceptual development work occurred in relation to and with others in the group at Youth Amplified, including RGHS students. On the other hand, concepts like 'standards' were not used to question and interrogate the meaning of terms, but to assert ideological positions that have been inherited from the past.

The use of materials helped to raise questions amongst the group and introduced new ideas and concepts, stimulating these young people to engage with dialogues and discussions at the radio station. Materials needed to be carefully selected and sensitively shared, as the young people made sense of these texts in different ways. For example, the *Afrikaaps* documentary, which explored the concept of 'language', produced a very defensive response from Greg, something for which I needed to have planned, in advance. Upon reflection, it was insufficient simply to say to the group that respect for different opinions is necessary. We needed to explore why it is important to respect different opinions and collectively think about what are likely consequences when this does not occur. Introducing and engaging with concepts such as 'linguistic diversity' and 'freedom of speech' may have enhanced these endeavours.

## **Conclusion**

Exploring how youth use language at school, in comparison to their linguistic practices in other educational sites, is illuminated by the manner in which young people engage with concepts and the ways that sets of utterances form speech genres that, in turn, shape dialogues. The use of language in different educational sites is entwined with the social hierarchies that exist in such places and the institutions that mediate language usage. Comparing language use in a range of places, with similar young people involved in each of these sites, therefore highlights the manner in which specific places inhibit or enable young people's linguistic capitals, how these places provide opportunities for young people to learn and how these sites show youth different futures. The place-specific operations of language are particularly pertinent to youth and their education. Language is the medium through which knowledge, ideas and meaning are

shared and communicated; it is a reservoir that is used for identity construction and development. However, language simultaneously distributes forms of power and status, both through the opportunities which people obtain to use it and in the form of linguistic practices: people's word choices and the ways in which they utter these words, communicate their place in the social structure.

Language was therefore a central component of dialogic learning at RGHS, Youth Amplified and amongst the Doodvenootskap. The control desired by educators, combined with the bureaucratic forces that restrict spontaneity in their teaching practices, resulted in the use of highly prescribed centripetal language forces dominating dialogic interactions at RGHS. The cultural influences that produce DVS, with different associated histories related to democratic values, led to the group reclaiming and reinventing varieties of language. At times this led to more sufficiently interactive forms of dialogic learning amongst this group. Critical pedagogy at Youth Amplified laid the foundations for multiple contrasting perspectives and different linguistic forms to manifest. However, at times, school institutional cultures and social stratification repressed dialogic exchanges. Both RGHS and Youth Amplified illustrated how schools, as institutions, reinforce broader societal hierarchies through validating specific varieties of language and colonial and apartheid era discourses, in the post-apartheid period.

## **CHAPTER NINE**

### **A NEW EDUCATIONAL MATRIX**

*Intervention must be directed towards the interruption of what is and what appears inevitable, not towards well-meaning compliance.*

Fine, 1991: 183

*If it is in speaking their word that people, by naming the world, transform it, dialogue imposes itself as the way by which they achieve significance as human beings.*

Freire, 1970: 88

*Being so-called 'Coloured' is the most confusing and mind-boggling thing there is.*

Emile Jansen, Black Noise, quoted in Battersby, 2003: 123

#### **'Both and': learning standard forms, using local forms**

The opportunities that youth receive to use language, and the ways in which others interpret their linguistic products, play crucial roles in how they learn, through dialogue, in different places. As I have shown, the utterances that different young people use in dialogue are not equally valued, as their words form

part of a globalised linguistic economy, a system that assesses the value of particular linguistic products. In the process a linguistic hierarchy is created. In the global era, the remnants of colonialism, empire and enslavement remain relevant to the operations of the linguistic market, as they play out in local contexts. In different places worldwide, the value of various linguistic utterances is assigned and contested according to historical, political and social factors that are associated with different language varieties. In terms of contestation, for example, in the United States what has come to be known as the 'ebonics debate' has created heated discussion after an Oakland court resolution recognised the legitimacy of 'ebonics' or African American Vernacular English (AAVE). The court ruled that some instruction should take place in AAVE, but that educators also both need to facilitate the acquisition of standard English language skills and learn aspects of AAVE themselves (Delpit, 1997).

In Africa, a range of language policies has resulted from the contestation of the medium of instruction in classrooms. In 2001, Ghana, which had traditionally held a strong preference for the utilisation of local languages in primary education, radically altered its policies, introducing English as the sole medium of instruction from the first year of schooling (Albaugh, 2001). A 1988 United Nations report stated that 11 of the 15 former French colonies, in Africa, used French as a medium of instruction. Drastic changes to these language policies in former French colonies, in the face of new waves of local nationalisms, has meant that most of those countries now experiment with the use of local languages in primary education (Albaugh, 2001). In Cameroon, 286 local languages are spoken and yet children are schooled in either English or French (Esch, 2012). In Morocco, a prominent philanthropist, Nouredine Ayouch, proposed several policy changes to the language of instruction in Moroccan public education (Schulthies, 2014). Ayouch claimed that Modern Standard Arabic and Moroccan Arabic comprise different languages rather than simply varieties on a linguistic continuum (Schulthies, 2014). These examples illustrate that the relationship between colonial languages, local languages and varieties of both is extremely complex, making national or even regional education policies fraught with difficulties. Languages are better envisioned as living, changing and mixed

heteroglot products that display evidence of historical and social relations and not as finite entities with distinct borders.

The diverse, fluid variations of particular languages and the use of different languages, in South Africa, has repercussions for young people's participation in forms of dialogic learning. The differences that youth observe between the language that they learn at home and the language of instruction they encounter at school, or the words used by their peers in informal educational contexts, are often interpreted as evidence of inferiority, resulting in silence and disengagement from these places. Alternatively, young people being made to feel inferior may lead to them retaliating.

While I agree with the sentiment of Stubbs (2002) in the epigraph of chapter eight, which states that work needs to be done to change attitudes towards different forms of language, attitude change type interventions are insufficient to deal with the challenges of linguistic diversity. Teacher training programmes do indeed need to include modules on socio-linguistics. However, in a 'knowledge society' young people also need to acquire powerful forms of language and knowledges (Christie, 2008; Williams & Wilson, 2010). These resources arm youth such that they may realise their aspirations, as they enter places like tertiary education institutions and employment sites.

If young people do not have access to powerful forms of language, their economic possibilities are guaranteed to be restricted (Delpit, 1997). Furthermore, standardised forms of language are dispersed at schools, meaning that school discontinuation has dire consequences for young people's future prospects in the current economic context, both in terms of employment opportunities and in relation to access to tertiary forms of education. Van der Berg et al (2011) show that if a South African has 1 or 11 years of schooling it makes little difference to their chances of being employed, with the figure remaining constant at approximately 50% of people with 1-11 years of schooling finding employment. While just over 50% of people with 11 years of education find employment, the figure rises slightly to +55% with 12 years, approaching 70% with 13 years and over 85% with 14 years of education (Van der Berg et al, 2011). While this



research is correlational and not causal and many variables influence both long education careers and employment (such as parents' income), the linguistic capitals that schools disseminate and their value to young people's future employment prospects, cannot be ignored.

In addition to the linguistic capital that schools may confer, the value of young people's mother-tongue language should be acknowledged and affirmed, as it is an integral component of their social interactions. As Lisa Delpit (1997) says in relation to the ebonics debate, - *I can be neither for ebonics or against ebonics any more than I can be for or against air.*

Delpit's (1997) point is that this form of language is an inextricable part of many African American people's everyday practices. The use of mother-tongue language commonly occurs through students' interactions with the people to whom they are most emotionally connected, in places that contain high levels of intimacy (Dyer, 2008). Thus, proclaiming that a student's family and other people close to them are ignorant, based on the status of the language that they use, is not likely to enhance the status of schooling in children's estimation.

The challenge for teachers and other educators is therefore to do 'both and': to provide access to the national standard, the powerful forms of language that the school, state and society valorise and to affirm all of the language forms that young people bring to the classroom as unique, valuable and potentially creative cultural artefacts (Delpit, 1997). Young people should be encouraged to use their mother-tongue language unashamedly, given that pressurising speakers constantly to monitor how they speak, produces silence; it is very difficult simultaneously to think about language use, as well as to analyse the logic of thoughts (Delpit, 1997). It can also be extremely damaging to learners' self-esteem for them to be constantly corrected. At the same time students need to be encouraged to acquire powerful language forms, through educators' use of creative teaching methods. Delpit (1997) suggests role-plays, such as imitating news presenters, as a way for students to practice acquiring new language forms without feeling exposed. The value of youth interacting with NGOs and learning these institutions' discourses 'on the job' was demonstrated amongst the Doodvenootskap. Students learning from peers who attend more affluent schools,

whilst working collaboratively on a radio show, at Youth Amplified, also demonstrated forms of knowledge co-construction.

Work with a variety of young people, from a range of schools at Youth Amplified, indicated that interventions that attempt to change attitudes to language should not be restricted to low-income schools and educators. Students and teachers at elite schools would also benefit from programmes that promote linguistic diversity. At Youth Amplified students who attended elite schools appeared to be unaware of the workings of socio-linguistics and history, often assuming that standardised forms of language were 'better' than other varieties. If educators and students at elite schools were to develop a robust understanding of the social elements of language in South Africa, this may stimulate forms of empathy across socio-economic divides. This work should not be intended to create 'sympathy for the poor', but to catalyse an interest in our collective and often shameful South African history and an appreciation for the diverse range of cultural resources that make up our eclectic society.

A useful educational exercise may be to include the linguistic history of the Cape as a component of the school curriculum, one from which both educators and learners could benefit. Prior to this project I was slightly familiar with the linguistic history of Kaapse Afrikaans. However, through analysing the relationship between this history and students' and educators' attitudes to language, as well as by learning about socio-linguistic theory of language standardisation, the effects of these relations became far more explicit to me. I believe students and educators could also benefit from studying this history.

This recommendation refers to, and could benefit, students and teachers at all South African schools. My work with students from elite schools, at Youth Amplified, indicated that the education of these young people could be greatly enhanced by rigorous studies of the operations of history and social stratification. I am therefore denouncing policies that recommend leaving elite schools to their own devices, instead only targeting the academic performance of students at low-income schools. Some contemporary research and policy states that South African schools could be grouped into two separate education systems: a more

elite, affluent, functional system and a large, historically 'Black', dysfunctional system (Fleisch, 2008; Van der Berg, 2007). This kind of theorising often leads to programmes that, simultaneously, attempt to raise the examination results of learners at marginalised schools and refrain from interfering in 'high-performing' schools.

Such conceptualisations of South African schooling fail to recognise that these two education systems are entwined. Recipients and personnel in the first system are usually people who have benefitted from the systematic oppression of people in the other 'system'. Furthermore, schools and people in the first system maintain their privileges through endorsing the linguistic market and attempting to uphold 'standards'. Such practices assert particular cultural and linguistic norms and values as superior.

A discourse of two education systems therefore fails to recognise how both systems valorise the linguistic capital of learners in the first system and denigrates the linguistic capital of learners in the second system. It also negates the fact that the first system has historically oppressed, and is reliant upon, the second system. For example, parents who are employed as domestic workers are most likely to work in the houses of parents whose children attend schools in the more elite system. Personnel in the more affluent education system who disseminate discourses of 'standards' therefore fail to recognise how they themselves benefit from investing in these sentiments and how such attitudes denigrate the cultural resources of others, perpetuating inequality in the process. In short, a 'two-systems' paradigm enables the most privileged schools, educators, parents and students to evade reflecting on inequalities in the education system and society and the manner in which these inequalities are reproduced. In contradistinction to this 'two-systems' view of the educational landscape, promoting dialogic explorations amongst all South Africans may be used to highlight different perspectives, question assumptions and generate forms of critical self-reflection. In turn this may challenge some of the taken for granted ways of thinking that remain from the apartheid past.

### **Places as intersecting sets of social relations**

The centrality of language to places of learning demonstrates how language, social relations and place are enmeshed, as they simultaneously impact on educational sites. RGHS, Youth Amplified and the Dodvernoodskap therefore need to be understood spatio-dialogically, in relation to linguistic, spatial and historical forces, as well as vis-à-vis neighbourhoods and other places through which youth move.

The three places that comprise this multi-site ethnography are conceptualised as sets of social relations that overlap at particular moments. These places all involved youth from the same marginalised community in Cape Town, participating or being silenced, in dialogic interactions. The manner in which these places impact on dialogic learning cannot be understood by looking 'into' particular geographical locations. Instead, spatio-dialogic learning needs to be unpacked by interrogating how social relations, that produce particular places, operate collectively, over time. The social relations that comprise Rosemary Gardens High School were bound up in the attempts of the education department and educators to curtail external forces, in order to control teaching and learning and ensure that a set of prescribed educational outcomes manifest. Educators are pressurised to deliver the curriculum in a predetermined manner and 'teach to the test', as workbooks are regularly inspected and standardised tests and examinations are the sole mechanisms used to evaluate the quality of teaching and learning. Educators are therefore tempted to dictate paragraphs of notes, as was evident in chapter five, as these practices demonstrate to officials that the curriculum has been delivered and that teachers have performed their duties adequately. In response to these social relations that comprise teaching and learning at RGHS, many young people discontinue their schooling. The dearth of dialogic learning at RGHS therefore appeared to be related to the school 'game' that is played out between the bureaucracy, educators and learners.

The Doodvenootskap was produced through a different configuration of social relations. Institutions like NGOs are not constrained by the predefined limits of curricula, or the ambitions of officials. These organisations are often flavoured

with popular culture, inducing vibrant forms of youth identity. However, CRAAG demonstrated intolerance and resistance to dialogue when DVS displayed values and practices that contravened the ideological positions associated with this organisation. For example, on one occasion CRAAG staff told its DVS employees that they would need to choose between performing with DVS and working for CRAAG, as DVS lyrics were, in the opinion of the CRAAG leadership, promoting forms of violence. CRAAG did not propose holding a discussion in order to explore this issue, but decreed the course of events, in a non-conversational manner. Organisations like NGOs may repress dialogic interactions, if these debates and discussions are deemed to threaten the organisation's values and goals. DVS were therefore, at times, restricted by certain organisational prescriptions. Similarly, at Youth Amplified I was instructed to convey to the young BHHS student that her official title was 'hostess' and not 'presenter', a term which she had used on air and which contravened the radio station's protocols. On another occasion we were directed to include advertisements, provided by the radio station, as part of the show. Dialogue was therefore constrained by social relations that were integral to these places, but not necessarily located *inside* the geographical locations associated with a particular place.

Dialogic learning at RGHS was also substantially shaped by Real spatial forces related to the neighbourhood of Rosemary Gardens. Despite educators' best efforts to insulate the school from the social problems that exist in the Rosemary Gardens community, it is impossible to quarantine schools, as young people move through a range of places, including the school, home and neighbourhoods, places that are interconnected and have relevance for one another. Thus, while South African schools in low-income communities operate such that they attempt to safeguard themselves from the perceived malaise of families and communities, these attempts are futile. The challenges that exist in local communities, and the linguistic capital that young people accumulate in these sites, cannot be 'externalised' from educational institutions, because they are integral components of the learners who attend these schools.

The silencing of young people, in classrooms at Rosemary Gardens High School, is therefore partly the result of Real socio-spatial relations that originate *outside* of

the classroom. Creating the conditions for learners to speak *in* the classroom, in relation to their academic work, requires that a range of socio-emotional issues that perturb students, related to these Real spatial forces, have been appeased. The high levels of violence that exist in Rosemary Gardens traumatise young people and disrupt their schooling experiences. Almost all of the students I spoke to commented on the effects of gang violence in their neighbourhood. Both of the learners described in depth in chapter five commented on this issue. Mo said:

*M: What happened to me this year, they called the police that come with these big black vans they call them the Torkma. If your place is too corrupt they send them out with guns. They start searching everyone. They put you on the ground, hands at the back of your head. They put a gun against your head and they search you. Everyday I got searched. That was the worst time in my life cause everyday I got searched out. I went to the shop got searched out here. But it actually for a good cause cause the gangsters shooting everyone.*

And Tracey said that:

*T: We don't know where and why the gangsters is gonna shoot against the other group. We just hear shooting and we have to run. We have to duck and dive for our lives day in and day out...*

Understanding learner silence and dialogic interactions in Rosemary Gardens classrooms cannot, therefore, be comprehended without perceiving these classrooms as linked to the web of places through which learners move and which are related to the histories of apartheid and colonialism. The homes and neighborhood in which these youth live are disrupted by a culture of violence (Pelser, 2008) that seeps into the school place. The extent of this culture of violence is demonstrated by the fact that in 2012, Helen Zille, who was the premier of the Western Cape province at the time, asked president Jacob Zuma to deploy the military to Rosemary Gardens and Hanover Park (<http://www.citypress.co.za/politics/zuma-replies-to-zille-20120718>). Zille claimed that 23 people, including seven children, had been murdered in a spike of gang

violence.

The turbulent conditions in the Rosemary Gardens community also functioned to exclude and ultimately silence some of these young people by hindering their participation at Youth Amplified. As Bray et al (2010) state, a quiet, neighbourhood-specific violence permeates post-apartheid Cape Town. This 'quiet violence' takes the form of apartheid era residential divisions that continue to segregate township youth from many of the well-resourced places and globalised discourses that their middle-class peers are able to access. Notwithstanding the effects of the Rosemary Gardens community hindering young people's participation at Youth Amplified, some young people from this neighbourhood were able to participate in the show. For the learners that remained in the Youth Amplified programme, English was an invaluable resource that buttressed their participation. However, promoting pride in whatever language young people are most comfortable conversing, without negating the fact that English functions as a powerful form of linguistic capital that students need to acquire, aided these young people from Rosemary Gardens, at Youth Amplified. For example, after watching the Afrikaaps documentary, Mo began to speak in Kaapse Afrikaans live on air and the hostess, Kelly, translated. Mo told me that his mother enjoyed hearing him speak in 'their' language. Exposing young people to the fact that sociolinguistic norms vary, that languages have ideological effects and that ways of using language are historically situated, such as the Afrikaaps film portrayed, can therefore act as a powerful pedagogical method (Alim, 2009).

Critical pedagogical interventions, such as Youth Amplified, originate from a different set of social relations, in comparison to the historical traditions that constitute South African classrooms and schools. Such places can expose youth to an informal curriculum that speaks directly to their marginalisation and provoke dialogic interactions between different groups and individuals. However, these kinds of interventions need to be cognisant of the fact that young people are not all "oppressed" in the same way. In South Africa, some township youth are upwardly mobile, attending new and old elite schools, while other poor young people have acquired employment in organisations like CRAAG, without any



formal qualifications. Some have found temporary wealth through forms of 'predatory capitalism', in the informal economy or forms of criminality (Standing, 2004). The deficit model of 'the oppressed' therefore diminishes youth agency and is not able to describe the range of ways in which young people are, at times, simultaneously empowered and/or marginalised. Critical pedagogical interventions that involve diverse groups of young people therefore need to be careful not to alienate some participants or homogenise their target population. Such programmes should also bear in mind that youth are affiliated to various institutions and group identities, like the schools that they attend.

The places through which youth move therefore accompany them as they enter into new places. If classrooms and other educational sites could be re-envisioned as junctions where different sets of social relations intersect, the plethora of resources and people that are contingent to these places could be utilised to enhance young people's overall education. Each of the places that I have described contains value and merit and could potentially benefit youth. This kind of educational project would require skilled and capacitated managers and inter-sectoral collaboration, for example, in the Western Cape, between the Education department, the Department of Cultural Affairs and Sport, NGOs, community centres, clinics and the Health Department. My American colleagues from Vanderbilt University were amazed by the fact that Rosemary Gardens High School had access to 10-15 young people, paid for by government, working at the school every afternoon in order to facilitate sport, academic support, music and dance. However, these young people were employed by the provincial Department of Cultural Affairs and Sport and they did not interact with the school or support its priorities, meaning that the education department and DCAS burrowed away in isolation, attempting to achieve their own sets of predefined outcomes. Many poor, urban South African schools and communities have access to a range of educational places that operate in their locales. In my work at EMEP it was common to find 20-30 NGOs working, uncoordinated, in one school. Schools are also almost always positioned in fairly close proximity to community centres, clinics and libraries. Unfortunately, each of these institutions has its own set of predefined outcomes to which it aspires, meaning that collaboration is often experienced as an impediment to achieving goals.



Individually, these institutions and their associated government departments work towards specified sets of 'deliverables', with minimal coordination or synchronicity and little planning in terms of what would be of most benefit to the young people involved.

### **Dialogic, Lived learning**

Dialogic theory therefore interrogates how relations and utterances are dialogically embedded within historical and contemporary social contexts. The verbal exchanges in which youth from Rosemary Gardens engaged, as documented in this study, were interacting, dialogically, with 'heteroglot tongues' from the past, some of which combined to produce the language that these young people learn at home in the twenty-first century. Other tongues from the past that shape contemporary dialogues position users of Kaapse Afrikaans as inferior and stratify the linguistic economy, as it currently exists in South Africa. Laying down sets of answering words, in a dialogue, therefore comprises an announcement of who one is, where one has come from and where one fits into the social hierarchy.

It was clear to me that students at Rosemary Gardens High School desire this ability to speak socially and feel empowered. The head boy, a leadership position designated by the school, described his favourite aspect of serving on the Cape Town junior city council in 2012 as follows:

*B: In the council chambers I am the junior speaker so I maintain the order and things like that.*

*A: Do you enjoy that kind of work?*

*B: I love it. I love it. The thing I love most is the mute button, Adam (both laugh). I love that mute button. What happens is, I need to make sure we keep to the rules and stick to agenda. When there's another topic on the agenda I read it out loud and then they debate about it. When the speaker makes a ruling that stays. So when I make a ruling that stays, which I love. When we in the chamber I'm in control. The reason why I love that mute button is when they talk too much or say*

*something that's not on the agenda or they starting to argue then I press that mute button and it mutes all the mics in the audience and then only I can speak and say okay, Adam you have the right to freedom of expression.*

This conversation indicates how Rosemary Gardens youth yearn to speak and be heard by others, as this does not regularly happen in their lives. Inserting oneself into conversations and producing utterances is the first step towards participation in dialogue and creating forms of what I have called '*Lived space*'. Lived space is produced by young people negotiating the *Real* challenges of, for example, violence, overcrowding and unemployed parents, as well as the *Imagined space* contained in language, which constructs them as certain types of subjects. In the interstices of these forms of Real and Imagined space, young people may produce self-definitive utterances in the presence of, and in relation to, others. However, as I have argued, it is insufficient for youth merely to produce answering words in order for the production of dialogic learning and Lived space to occur. Answering words may be used to oppress and exclude other people, to put them 'on mute', or simply to repeat a discourse heard elsewhere. These words need to be uttered in the spirit of inquiry, knowledge co-construction and openness to changing one's opinion, not used in order to assert a discourse or silence others. Dialogic, Lived learning occurs through actively engaging with other perspectives, utilising concepts that one has acquired in different contexts, while concurrently considering the ways in which history stratifies society. This kind of learning is difficult to stimulate in contexts like Rosemary Gardens, because residents who bear the weight of history often adopt defensive positions, in situations where dialogue may potentially ensue.

Lived space was observed in each of the places that I have described. At RGHS students adopted three responses to Real and Imagined socio-spatial relations, either discontinuing their schooling, or stoically persevering with their formal education, whilst accepting the linguistic hierarchy and market as legitimate. A third group of students remained at school yet expressed extreme distrust in 'the system', identifying with a range of conspiracy theories and hinting at the ways in which 'Coloured' youth are oppressed. In chapter five I stated that each of these strategies display elements of Lived space, as these young people negotiate Real

and Imagined spatial forces to carve out a personal course of action. However, the first route of school discontinuation is a form of Lived space that heavily curtails a number of the options that will be available to these young people in the future. It also functions to silence (Fine, 1991) the dialogic interactions that these youth may potentially engage in with the school and broader society. Persevering with school, whilst accepting one's linguistic capital as inferior, also displays aspects of Lived space, but this option may well be damaging to these young people's self-esteem. The third strategy of 'scepticism and perseverance' illuminates how these young people yearn for dialogic engagement that confronts their historical circumstances. This position, that some Rosemary Gardens youth display, indicates the great potential for forms of dialogic Lived learning, something which these young people rarely receive from the places in/through which they learn and move.

DVS write lyrics that directly engage with their Real and Imagined circumstances, demonstrating elements of Lived space and even forms of dialogic Lived learning. However, DVS' exposure to concepts related to NGO discourse and hip-hop sub-culture often led to members of the group simply reiterating words that they had heard elsewhere, without these young men reflecting on the meaning of these terms. At times it felt as if the Doodvenootskap could have benefitted from being exposed to a different set of utterances and a more rigorous 'curriculum', one that would have challenged them to engage with some of the complexities of the concepts to which they were being introduced. Dialogic learning involves accepting a range of answers that. At Youth Amplified young people from Rosemary Gardens displayed elements of Lived space either through attacking their peers or by cooperating with diverse groups of youth to co-construct knowledge in a form of dialogic Lived learning. The latter was a rare occurrence, one that needed to be built on through facilitated reflection and materials that connected with the life worlds of these young people. When it did occur, the experience was extremely rewarding for a number of young people, including myself.

### **Beating the system**

The proposed education project at the heart of this research extends beyond the walls of classrooms and takes power relations and history seriously. At the same time, it is uncompromising about the urgency for the acquisition of forms of language, thought and skills that are required to enable young people's success. It entails acknowledging that education is a truly social process that involves collective effort and reciprocal understanding. More than most other people, South Africans should be aware of the dangers of authoritative, monological 'truths' that oppress and segregate groups of people and which restrict the mobility and aspirations of youth.

Like many of the people I encountered in Rosemary Gardens, Mo, the young man described in chapter five, was deeply sceptical towards broader societal powers that he believed oppress people in Cape Town neighbourhoods that were constructed through forced removals. On a number of occasions, Mo's sentiments led me to conclude that he wanted to develop his socio-political consciousness, but he was not sure how to proceed with this desire. Mo's scepticism catalysed an interest in the film the Matrix, in which people were subdued and exploited through a simulated reality controlled by machines. Students like Mo understand that systemic, structural power relations function to reproduce the status quo, making it difficult for young people from his neighbourhood to realise their aspirations. However, Mo also insinuated that it is only by both interrogating this unjust system and utilising analytical skills and qualifications, such as those gained at school, that youth from Rosemary Gardens may overcome the structural conditions that militate against their success. To demonstrate these sentiments, Mo described what he values in terms of learning in the following manner. It is appropriate, moreover, that he, as one of the young people from Rosemary Gardens, has the final word:

*A: And what does learning mean to you?*

*M: in academics or life?*

*A: in anything, you choose...*

*M: It depends what way you take it. It's like people tell you stories and you must read between the lines, what's he actually trying to tell you. That's learning. I like to learn so. Like people telling me a story and I take that story and listen deeply and hear what they actually trying to say. I like that movie the matrix. Like Morpheus with the blue and red pill. If you can see through the system you can actually beat the system.*

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## **Appendices**

### **Appendix A**

# **THE ROSEMARY GARDENS DEVELOPMENT TRUST**

Public Benefit organisation no. 93/00/34/348  
084-316

NPO No:

*Managers and Co-ordinators of The S.I.P. Project*

## **PILOT PROJECT PROPOSAL**



# **S.I.P. SCHOOL**

Trustees:

DELETED

**Endorsed by Western Cape Education M.E.C. Mr. Donald Grant  
1<sup>st</sup> June 2012**

## INTRODUCTION

**The S.I.P. PROJECT addresses SOCIAL and MINDSET CHANGE in Rosemary Gardens by 'raising horizons' for teenagers at Rosemary Gardens High School**

For our new democracy to move forward, South Africa urgently needs not only new, inspired leaders, but thousands and thousands of responsible citizens with socially-conscious mindsets - in each suburb and at each level of society.

And where are these 'new' citizens to be found? At school where our country's youth are required by law to spend 12 formative years – a vulnerable, "captive" audience available and receptive to wholesome, positive influencing.

But at Rosemary Gardens High School these 'new' citizens are dropping out at the alarming rate of 200 per year . (And that's just at one Cape Flats high school. Don't let's forget about the 100's of kids dropping out before they even get to high school).

The questions we want to answer with this pilot project are, as our Patron Prof X says:-

- Where do drop-outs drop into?
- and can we empower these vulnerable young people to change their mindsets and their lives for their own sakes and for the sake of our country?

The S.I.P. school concept significantly underpins Western Cape Education Department strategic objectives for improving education outcomes because it aims to create an enabling school environment which will change young people's mindsets and empower them to reach for new educational horizons and new social horizons.

**We seek partners and funds to enable us to develop a 5-year S.I.P. SCHOOL pilot project, involving the whole 2012 Grade 8 class of 280 boys and girls as the pilot group.**

### MISSION OF THE S.I.P. SCHOOL PROJECT

The mission of the S.I.P. SCHOOL project is to turn Rosemary Gardens High School into a safe, nurturing, positive and enabling haven where vulnerable youth caught in social 'crossfire' CHOOSE to spend their time. The S.I.P. SCHOOL will :-

- (1) Provide a positive attractive school environment which learners, teachers and community are proud of.
- (2) Give learners alternatives to the social threats of their environments by involving them in afternoon sports/cultural and skills development programmes and homework classes
- (1) Introduce leadership development, peer education and community outreach programmes to boost self-esteem and help in the self-actualisation process
- (3) Help learners to improve the quality of their education outcomes
- (4) Create traditions and a sense of belonging and restore dignity.
- (5) Keep the young people at this school safe in a gang-land scenario for at least the afternoons and soon Saturdays and school holidays as well.
- (6) Help our young people to make better life choices and slowly filter these new positive values into their community, thus slowly but steadily bringing about community social and mindset change in Rosemary Gardens.



## Appendix B

### Youth Amplified Images









## Appendix C

### Semi-structured interview schedule

1. Can you please think back and tell me about your first day of school?
2. I realise that since that first day quite a few years have past, what is your general feeling towards school, at this time?
3. What have been some of the positive things that you remember about school over the years?
4. What are some of the not so nice memories that you have from your schooling over the years?
5. Please tell me a story about one experience at school that you really enjoyed.
6. Please tell me a story about one experience at school that you really did not enjoy.
7. What, in your opinion, does 'learning' mean?
8. When do you 'learn' at school?
9. What do you do to try and help yourself in the learning process?
10. What helps you to learn?
11. What makes learning difficult?
12. Without mentioning names, please describe your best teacher for me, telling me what this teacher is like and why you like this teacher?
13. Without mentioning names, please describe your worst teacher for me, telling me what this teacher is like and why you do not like this teacher?
14. How would you describe the interactions between the teacher and learners in your best class?
15. Can you tell me a story about one experience that sticks out in your mind from this class?
16. How would you describe the interactions between the teacher and learners in your worst class?
17. Can you tell me a story about one experience that sticks out in your mind from this class?
18. What do you want to do when you finish school?
19. How do you think school can help you to achieve your answer to the previous question?
20. Generally, do you feel motivated to go to school? Why/why not?
21. When do you feel motivated to go to school?
22. When do you not feel motivated to go to school?
23. Can you describe your family for me?
24. Does your family teach you things? Please explain your answer
25. Do you learn at home? How?
26. What are your interests/hobbies?
27. Do you learn things from these interests/hobbies?
28. What do you do after school?
29. What do you do on the weekend?
30. Do you think that you learn a lot outside of school? How, in which ways?

## Appendix D

### **The Observation process**

The study has been explained in full to the school principal and s/he has granted permission for the study to take place at his or her school. Permission will be obtained from the principal and class teachers to observe learners in the classroom environment. The observer will be introduced to the class and it will be stated that s/he is interested in teaching and learning. The introduction is necessarily vague so as not to influence the behaviour of learners. Upon completion of the research, feedback on the research findings will be shared with classes that were observed.

### **Observation schedule**

|               |   |
|---------------|---|
| Student:      | A.COOPER  |
| Organization: | UNIVERSITY OF STELLENBOSCH  |
| Study Leader: | DR A. BADROODIEN  |
| Title:        | <i>"Learning takes place": How young people from one low-income neighbourhood learn through dialogue in different places.</i> |

Date:

Class/group being observed:

**(please do not include any names or other means by which learners/educators may be identified)**

### Observation schedule

| Teacher says: | Learners say: |
|---------------|---------------|
|               |               |

Please observe and note the following

Examples of instances when learners' interests are stimulated in the learning environment

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

Behaviour that indicates that learners' interests have been stimulated

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

Quotes from learners that indicate that their interests have been stimulated

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

Behaviour that indicates that learners' interests have not been stimulated

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

Quotes from learners that indicate that their interests have not been stimulated

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

Actions of educators/facilitators that result in learners disengaging from the learning process

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

Classroom activities that result in learners disengaging from the learning process

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

What actions/activities encourage learner participation

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

What actions/activities hamper learner participation

.....  
.....

.....  
.....  
Description of the nature of learner participation  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

.....  
Do learners appear to be motivated to engage with activities?  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

.....  
Behaviour that indicates motivation or de-motivation  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

.....  
Instances of conflict between educators and learners  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

.....  
Instances of conflict between learners  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

Appendix E



## WESTERN CAPE Education Department

Provincial Government of the Western Cape

[awyngaar@pgwc.gov.za](mailto:awyngaar@pgwc.gov.za)

tel: +27 021 476 9272

Fax: 0865902282

Private Bag x9114, Cape Town, 8000

wced.wcape.gov.za

**RESEARCH\_REFERENCE:** 20110823-0011

**ENQUIRIES:** Dr A T Wyngaard

Mr Adam Cooper  
71 Mountain Road  
Woodstock  
7925

**Dear Mr Adam Cooper**

**RESEARCH PROPOSAL: "LEARNING TO ASPIRE": HOW YOUTH IN CAPE TOWN ENGAGE WITH THE TOWNSHIP SCHOOL SPACE IN ORDER TO REALISE SOME OF THEIR ASPIRATIONS**

Your application to conduct the above-mentioned research in schools in the Western Cape has been approved subject to the following conditions:

1. Principals, educators and learners are under no obligation to assist you in your investigation.
2. Principals, educators, learners and schools should not be identifiable in any way from the results of the investigation.
3. You make all the arrangements concerning your investigation.
4. Educators' programmes are not to be interrupted.
5. The Study is to be conducted from **26 August 2011 till 30 September 2011 and 17 January 2012 till 31 August 2012**
6. No research can be conducted during the fourth term as schools are preparing and finalizing syllabi for examinations (October to December).
7. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey, please contact Dr A.T Wyngaard at the contact numbers above quoting the reference number.
8. A photocopy of this letter is submitted to the principal where the intended research is to be conducted.
9. Your research will be limited to the list of schools as forwarded to the Western Cape Education Department.
10. A brief summary of the content, findings and recommendations is provided to the Director: Research Services.
11. The Department receives a copy of the completed report/dissertation/thesis addressed to:

**The Director: Research Services  
Western Cape Education Department  
Private Bag X9114  
CAPE TOWN  
8000**

We wish you success in your research.

Kind regards.

Signed: Audrey T Wyngaard for: **HEAD: EDUCATION**

**DATE: 23 August 2011**

Appendix F:  
Informed consent forms: learners and parents



## **PARTICIPANT INFORMATION LEAFLET AND ASSENT FORM**



### **TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT:**

“Learning to aspire”: exploring the leaning practices of youth in relation to their life goals

**RESEARCHERS NAME(S): Adam Cooper**

**ADDRESS: 71 Mountain Road, Woodstock, 7925, Cape Town**

**CONTACT NUMBER: 0842612750**

### **What is research?**

Research is something we do to find new knowledge about the way things (and people) work. We use research projects or studies to help us find out more about disease or illness. Research also helps us to find better ways of helping, or treating children who are sick.

### **What is this research project all about?**

In this project we will try to find out how young people interact with schools and how they think the school can help them achieve their goals for their lives. We will explore how young people learn, in different contexts, and why they want to learn. We will also try to find out whether they are motivated to go to school and how that motivation may be linked to their goals for the future. In order to try and gather this information the researcher, Adam Cooper, will observe media club meetings at your school. Adam will then ask media club members if they would be willing to talk to him one on one and tell him about how they learn at home, at school and in their community. At the end of the project Adam will write up a report, but nobody's real name will be used in this report.

Why have I been invited to take part in this research project?

**You have been invited to participate in the research because you are a part of your school's media club and we think that you may have some interesting ideas to share about your learning processes.**

### **Who is doing the research?**

Adam Cooper, a PhD student in the Department of Education Policy Studies at Stellenbosch University, is doing the research as part of his doctoral degree. For Adam's studies he is required to write a thesis of about 80000 words. Adam is being supervised by Dr Azeem Badroodien.

### **What will happen to me in this study?**

You may choose to participate in an in-depth, semi-structured interview discussion with Adam Cooper, which will last for approximately one hour. The purpose of the interview is to try and find out how young people learn, in different contexts and how they think learning will help them in their lives. The interview will be recorded with a voice recorder. In the interview Adam will ask you questions about your experiences of learning and your plans for the future. More specifically, these questions will involve how you learn at school, at home and in your community. There will also be some questions on what helps you to learn and the things which make learning difficult. After the interview Adam will listen to the recording again, analyse the information and write up a report. Nobody's real name will be used in the report and nobody will be able to find the participants in the study after the research is finished.

### **Can anything bad happen to me?**

There are no dangers involved in being part of this study and you may choose to withdraw from the study or stop the interview at any stage.

### **Can anything good happen to me?**

We hope that the interview will provide you with an opportunity to think about your life, the way in which you learn and your goals and that this process may help you in planning for your future. We hope that the research will help us to understand better how youth learn and that this will lead to schools and their learning processes becoming more child-friendly.

### **Will anyone know I am in the study?**

Under no circumstances will anybody know that you participated in the study and all of the information which you share will be kept private. When the research is written up nobody's real name will be used in the report.





**Who can I talk to about the study?**

If you have any questions or concerns about the study you are free to contact me, Adam Cooper, on 0842612750 or email me at [adcoops1980@gmail.com](mailto:adcoops1980@gmail.com). Any questions you have can also be directed to my supervisor Dr Azeem Badroodien, whose contact details are:

*phone number:* 0741432400

*email:* [badroodien@sun.ac.za](mailto:badroodien@sun.ac.za)

*address:* office number 3029; Department of Education Policy Studies Faculty of Education, University of Stellenbosch GC Cillie Building, Stellenbosch, 001.

**What are your research rights?**

You may withdraw your consent at any time and there will be no “come-backs” or grudges on my side. You are not giving up any legal claims or rights because of your participation in this research study. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, contact Ms Malene Fouche at 021-808 4622 [[mfouche@sun.ac.za](mailto:mfouche@sun.ac.za)] at the Division for Research Development.

**What if I do not want to do this?**

You may refuse to take part in this study, even if your parents have agreed to you participating in the research. You are free to stop being part of the study at any time and you will not get into trouble if this is what you want to do.

Do you understand this research study and are you willing to take part in it?

YES

NO

Has the researcher answered all your questions?

YES

NO

Do you understand that you can pull out of the study at any time?

YES

NO

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Child

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



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jou kennisvennoot • your knowledge partner

|  |
|--|
| <p><b>INFORMED CONSENT FOR SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS</b><br/><b>GUARDIANS/PARENTS OF LEARNERS</b></p> |
|--|

Student: ADAM COOPER

Organization: STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY

Study Leader: DR A. BADROODIEN

Title of Study: *“Learning to aspire”: How youth in Cape Town engage with the township school space in order to realise some of their life goals.*

### INFORMATION

I am a doctoral student at Stellenbosch University and am currently conducting a study on the life goals of youth at a few (chosen) high schools in the Western Cape. My aim is to better understand how young people, like your child, engage with the schools they attend in order to achieve some of their life goals. My focus in the project is on the experiences of learners of teaching and learning at school, as well as on their participation in- and motivation towards school, their learning experiences outside of school, and what they think they can accomplish in the future.

### INFORMED CONSENT: GUARDIANS/PARENTS OF LEARNERS

For the study to take place I require the permission of all guardians/parents of learners that are willing to take part in the study, especially those being interviewed on a one-to-one basis.

In requesting your permission to interview your child I can assure you that none of the questions that are asked will be damaging or hurtful in any way, nor will it cause them any undue stress. The questions are simply meant to focus on their views and understandings of their schooling and what they intend to do when they leave school.

The safety and welfare of your child will also be protected and ensured at all times. I will interview all learners in a safe classroom environment at the school, at a time that is suitable to each of them. Also be assured that your child has the right to withdraw from participating in the project at any time, whether at the beginning or end of the project.

I hereby formally seek your permission for your child to participate in my project. In giving permission you will be allowing me to interview your child in relation to the study project noted above, as well as to use and analyse the data that comes out of the interviews.

**INFORMED CONSENT SLIP**

I agree that my child may participate in interviews with the researcher, Adam Cooper. I understand the purpose of the study and have been informed of all implications and procedures.

**NAME** **OF** **GUARDIAN:**

.....

**SIGNATURE:**

.....

**NAME OF CHILD:**

.....

(PARTICIPANT)

**DATE:**

.....

**RESEARCHER:** ADAM COOPER

**SIGNATURE:**

.....

## Appendix G

sê amen

# Teesakkie se moes

Toeks kuier te lekker om haar aan high tea-etiket te steur en hoe meer ek haar waarsku dat mevrou Hoogenboezem in styl bedien wil word, hoe minder luister sy

Deur SORA SMIT



Die persoon wat uitvind hoe om van 'n pap teesakkie ontlaas te raak, moet 'n Nobelprys vir vrede kry. Waas eerlik. Hoe dikwels was jy nie al in 'n situasie waar jy by mense tee drink en dan is die teesakkie nog in die koppie nie? Jy kan dit nie in die plying sit nie, want dan drup die teekoppie nes jy dit lig!

En dit lyk so onmoontlik – die ou pap-sakkie wat soos 'n nat klappapier in jou koppie dryf. Jy skep dit dapper uit, maar niemand weet ooit wat om daarmee te maak nie. Ek het al sulke fraai, piepklein bakke gesien waarop daar "teesakkies" staan, maar hulle is so skaars soos tieners as die geute skoongemaak moet word. Met die gevolg dat die een wat ek het immer soek is.

So nooi Toeks vir mevrou Hoogenboezem vir tee. Toeks het altyd die hemel in haar hart, want, sê sy, mevrou Hoogenboezem het haar laas genoot en goeie beërenemense nooit altyd die ander persoon terug.

Maar waar mevrou Hoogenboezem 'n mens uit haar fynste personele koppies bedien ("Wat ek in Stratford-Upon-Avon gekoop het," "Dan spreek sy nog die naam in Hoogengels uit), gebruik Toeks sommer gewone koppies. My vriendin kuier alreëls lekker om haar nog aan hoogdravende high tea-etiket te steur en hoe meer ek haar waarsku dat mevrou Hoogenboezem,

wat dink haar sweet stink nie, in styl bedien wil word, hoe minder luister sy.

Natuurlik word die twee saamgenooi om die gesprek aan die gang te hou as Toeks nie by die verwaande dame se pretensieuse praatjies kan byhou nie.

"'n Mens het 'n graad in pretensie nodig as jy met mevrou H praat," het Mias, die dorp se modie-tandarts, nou die dag gesê.

So betand ek, Toeks en mevrou H om Toeks se eetkamer-tafel. Ek kon haar darem oortuig om die tee in die eetkamer te bedien en nie om die kombustafel soos Toeks aanvanklik beplan het nie. Toe ons gaan sit, belyk mevrou Hoogenboezem die teeservies krities.

"Nog van my oerle come geërf," sê Toeks en glimlag senuweegrig. "maar 'n paar koppies het al uitgebreuk."

Toe gebeur die onverwagte: Toeks los die teesakkies in die koppies! Gelukkig sien mevrou H dit aanvanklik nie raak nie omdat sy nie daaraan gewoond is nie. My teesakkie dryf sommer bo in die koppie rond, nes 'n opdrifsel. Ek skep dit vinnig uit en plaag net-net daarin om dit in my plying agter my koppe te laat neerplons, terwyl die lywige dame haarself kort-kort moet regskul om op die stoel te pas.

"Hulle maak nie meer eetkamerstoole soos in my dae nie!" kla mevrou H toe haar agterste oer die stoel se rante begin peul, nes die teesakkie oor my plying se rand.

"Ek sou ook werklik nie daardie soort kitsch kunswerk in my stikamer toegelaat het nie," beduie mevrou H na 'n skildery teen die muur.

"Dis dour my oerlede moeder gedoen," kom dit floutjies van Toeks en al sien sommer die tranes in haar oë, maar die wrede mevrou H, wat net aan haarself dink, is onkeerbare. Sy trek Toeks se huls uitmekaar.

En voor haar dryf die teesakkie in die tee. Ek mik-mik om dit uit te skep, maar mevrou H beduie so dat ek nie die koppie kan bykom nie. Ek besef desperate times calls for desperate measures en ek wys vervaard na die venster. "Spinnekop!" gil ek.

"O, my alle, bring die Doorn! Dat ek my in 'n huis begewe waar daar krupende goggenoppers lê!" snater mevrou H. Ek steek my hand uit om die teesakkie uit haar koppie te vis, maar die lywige dame draai presies op daardie oomblik weer terug om haarself met haar kantsakdoekie koel te waai. Daar keer die teekoppie op haar formidabele skoot om en die teesakkie trek uit my hand.

Nodeloos om te sê, het die dame verontreg opgewing (verbasend vinnig vir haar gewig) en geloop. "Ek het beter dinge om met my tyd te doen!" En net voor sy die deur dramaties toeklap, sien ek hoe die teesakkie in haar hare pryk met die floutjie met die etiket aan wat gesellig, nes 'n pendulum, oor haar voorkop heen en weer swaai. M

Illustrasie: Dr. Jans

**Translation of article “Teesakkie se Moses”: Teabags can go to hell  
(approximate translation of the title)**

*Toeks is too comfortable to try and impress high-tea etiquette upon her and the more I warn her that Mrs Hoogenboezem wants to be served in style, the less she listens.*

**By Sofia Smit**

The person who discovers how to dispose of a used teabag must receive a Nobel prize for freedom. Seriously. How often were you in the situation where you are drinking tea with people and the teabag is still in the cup? You can't put it on the saucer because then when you lift the teacup it drips! And it looks so bad- the old used teabag. You bravely get rid of it, but nobody knows what to do. I have seen those beautiful, tiny containers that say 'teabags', but they are as rare as teenagers when the gutters need to be cleaned. With the consequence that I am always searching for my one.

So Toeks invites Mrs Hoogenboezem for tea. Toeks has a golden heart because she says that Mrs Hoogenboezem invited her the last time and good Afrikaners always return the invitation. But whereas Mrs Hoogenboezem serves guests out of her finest porcelain cups ("that I bought in Stratford upon Avon", saying the name in high English), Toeks just uses ordinary cups. My friend is just too comfortable to try and impress pompous, high-tea etiquette to her and the more I warn her that Mrs Hoogenboezem, who thinks her sweat doesn't stink, wants to be served in style, the less she listens.

Naturally your truly is also invited to try and keep the conversation flowing because Toeks cannot concentrate on the conceited woman's pretentious words. "A person needs a degree in pretentiousness to have a conversation with Mrs H," the town's nice dentist said the other day.

This is how myself, Toeks and Mrs H landed up around Toek's table. I convinced her to serve the tea in the dining room and not around the kitchen table, like Toeks originally planned. As we went to sit Mrs Hoogenboezem observed the tea service critically.

"On my dead grandmother's grave", said Toeks and smiled nervously, "but a few teacups have chipped".

And then the unimaginable happened: Toeks left the teabags in the cups! Luckily Mrs H didn't notice because she isn't used to such things. My teabag floated around on the surface like debris. I threw it out quickly, slotting it in just behind my cup, on my saucer, while the bulky woman rearranged herself on her stool.

“They don’t make dining room chairs like they used to in my day”, Mrs H moaned as her big bottom fell over the sides of the chair in much the same way a teabag falls over the edge of a tea cup saucer. “I also wouldn’t have that kitsch artwork in my lounge”, motioned Mrs H to a painting on the wall. “It was made by my late mother”, came the response from Toeks and I see the tears begin to well in her eyes, but the cruel Mrs H who just thinks about herself is unstoppable. She tears Toeks’ house apart.

And in front of her floats the teabag. I plan to quickly nip it out the cup but Mrs H is positioned so that I can’t get to the cup. I decide desperate times call for desperate measures and I point at the window yelling “look spider!” “Oh my alla bring the doom! That I landed in a house with creeping goggonoppers” announces Mrs H. I stick my hand out to fish the teabag out of her cup, but the woman turned around to fan herself down with her lace handkerchief at that exact moment. The teacup fell onto her big lap and the teabag fell out of my hand.

Needless to say the wounded woman stood up (surprisingly quickly for her weight) and walked off. “I have better things to do with my time!” and just before she dramatically slammed the door shut, I see the teabag adorned in her hair with the string and the label, like a pendulum, swinging back and forth over her forehead.

## Appendix H

Abstract of Masters mini-thesis of Mr Abdullah Williams,

*“Towards participatory teaching and learning processes in the English language classroom”*

*In this mini-thesis, I argue that education is integrally linked to concepts of power and domination. All schooling arises from and is governed by ideological and political forces, however well-disguised these may be. The examination of my role as a teacher is thus intimately tied to the understanding of power relations operative at schools. It is very necessary that teachers need to look at whose cultural capital, both overt and covert, is placed “within” the school curriculum. They also need to focus on whose vision of economic, racial and sexual reality, and whose principles of social justice are embedded in the content and process of schooling.*

*A fundamental assumption of this study is that classroom-based interventions and small-scale research, such as participatory teaching and learning and emancipatory action research, can play a very important role in bringing about educational transformation. However, these strategies need to be linked to broader educational and political struggles otherwise they will not be able to contribute to the structural transformation of the system.*

*Another assumption of this mini-thesis is that many teachers, by and large, teach in an authoritarian fashion, using the transmission mode of teaching. Their students are given little encouragement to question, think critically and to make authentic contributions. In offering participatory teaching and learning as a way for teachers to establish democratic, dialogical and collaborative classroom processes, I do not do so on the understanding that it (the participatory approach) is the solution or cure to classroom problems. I want to argue, though, that it represents one form of pedagogical practice which could contribute to wider social and political transformation.*

## Appendix I

Youth Amplified hosted the junior mayor of Cape Town, who heads the Junior City Council (JCC). A young news editor in the Bush Radio studio called in as an 'anonymous caller' and questioned the integrity of the JCC in the following manner:

Angela: I have to jump in there, we have a caller online... hello caller

Caller: hello

Angela: who are we speaking to?

Caller: I'd rather remain anonymous

Angela: okay

Caller: the JCC has been labelled as an elite kind of org and DA-based what do you have to say about that

Angela: the caller says its been labelled elite and DA based

Caller: okay I'll listen to the answer on the radio

Mayoress: that is a very tough Q and I understand why it would be labelled as a DA thing seeing as though our municipal and provincial government...assistance

Angela: can I just jump in...to the anonymous caller, does it matter who is supporting it? Isn't the main aim to empower all youth

Mayoress: yes, I was just going to say

Angela: and that's what you just spoke about now politicizing everything. Does it matter if it gets support from the ANC, DA, NP what other political parties do you guys know? Does it matter? Its not the main aim to support different movements that we're trying to push

Mayoress: and that ties in with that brain, that brain of our parents of 1976 that we are still living in the struggle. No, no, no we are living in 2012 and whether it doesn't matter whether we're getting assistance from the DA, ANC...and no caller we are not an elite organization, caller, my name is \_\_\_\_\_, I am from Khayelitsha, my school is Mondale high school in Mitchell's Plain, how elite can I be really when I live in the place that has the highest rates of HIV



infection, highest rates of gangsterism and crime, how elite can I be, I'm going to explain to you the demographic in our

Angela: we have another caller...duh duh duh duh da da. Hello caller?

Caller: hi its anonymous back again, I just want to clear things up right, if you are talking about a political party, because your guest said, before you interrupted her, that they have been helped by the DA govt cause the western cape is governed by the DA, but at the end of the day it does matter who funds or helps you because the DA makes sure that the JCC implements its policies, if I give you money, I want you to listen to me and to do what I say

31:35

Angela: um caller

Caller: the DA will make sure that the JCC implements its policies. Okay thank you

Angela: caller I just want to ask you something, is this based on fact or assumption? Saying that the DA would ask the JCC to carry out certain policies

Caller: why wouldn't they?

Angela: okay I'm going to quickly refer you to Themba cause he is burning to ask you a question

Themba: hang on, I just want to answer your question with a particular question, what have you done to improve the situations that we face. Hmmm? This is a lady who is in school trying to deal with these problems, you're here criticizing, what have you done?

Caller: mmm mmm

Themba: what have you done?

Caller: that's great but you're not answering my question

Mayoress: let me just answer you, we are apolitical, JCC, we are not mandated to be involved in any political issue, we are not answerable to any political matter in municipal govt, in provincial govt, national govt, now when it comes to receiving money and funds, no, yes we do receive a particular assistance from the mayor cause she is the one whose running our city, but she doesn't give us money to run...to carry out policies that we want to implement the only reason that we're working with the mayor is that we're young people, we need assistance on running issues we are apolitical, we do not deal with political issues

Caller: great now, in terms of the JCC which schools do you choose from

Mayoress: I'm from Mondale high which is in mitchells plain, we have ...from... we have from melkbostrand private high school, we have different schools in the Cape Metropole, all schools in the Cape Metropole, you probably asking cause you know someone in the JCC and could not get picked, that is because the city council sends out nomination forms to the school and it is up to the school if they want to carry out the duty to give the opportunity to the young person

Caller: and what I'm thinking, someone from khayelitsha

Mayoress: I am from khayelitsha mama

Caller: I think there are more disadvantaged schools and I think that students from schools like that would appreciate this platform

Angela: I think we can answer your Q in studio cause the conversation is trailing but thank you so much for your question

Themba: can I just finalise that quickly you know cause I appreciate people like the mayoress cause she is trying to change with the platform she's been given (in the background...uuuuh what are you doing in your community) they're given circumstances they're given situations. You have never donated a single money I presume into the running of Cape Town and fixing this kind of stuff and you come and criticize, I think you should envy these people

Angela: I think we should appreciate both the caller and Thandokazi today

Caller: I think that's very rude because first of all you don't know who I am and second of all you assume that I don't donate or play my part, I'm way older, I've done stuff. So what have you done, please tell me

Angela: caller I think we are going to have to end this conversation please do join our facebook group

Caller: no the guy must answer what has he done that is so amazing?

Angela: I think I'm gonna ...

Caller: answer please answer

Angela: Themba? (whats she asking?) the caller is asking what have you done

Themba: well the fact that I'm a part of youth amplified and the mere fact that I'm expressing myself and that I'm doing something for my community

Caller: laughing...that's great, thank you

Angela: wwwwoooo. Okay okay okay. I just need to clear something quickly, firstly this show is not here to criticize anybody, it is not the point of youth amplified, please listen to our jingle and hear what is the point that youth amplified exists, it is here for upliftment and empowerment, secondly we appreciate all forms of comments and opinions and we respect them in every way and thirdly you can see that the youth in this studio is very passionate about the youth and upliftment, fourthly we also respect adult opinions in every single way. Themba is going to give you a formal apology in a letter if you want to please post your address on our page and we'll see that it gets to you immediately, yes.

Mayoress: and lastly JCC is non-political

Angela: okay that is thing we had to clear up but I think you did. Respect to the caller that did phone in. respect to Themba that almost lost us and I just want to say again that I just want to say that we can see again how passionate the youth is about this and we really trying, we really trying, guns blazing whatever we do there's no encouragement but here there is the breaking down thing and that's what saddens us as youth amplified, we not getting the maximum support but we are getting the maximum criticism, if I may say so and that is making us sad, so now we just gonna be sad...done now, mayor what have you done, seeing as though we doing the whole what I have done thing. I have sat in this chair...mayor what have you done or what has the JCC done?

